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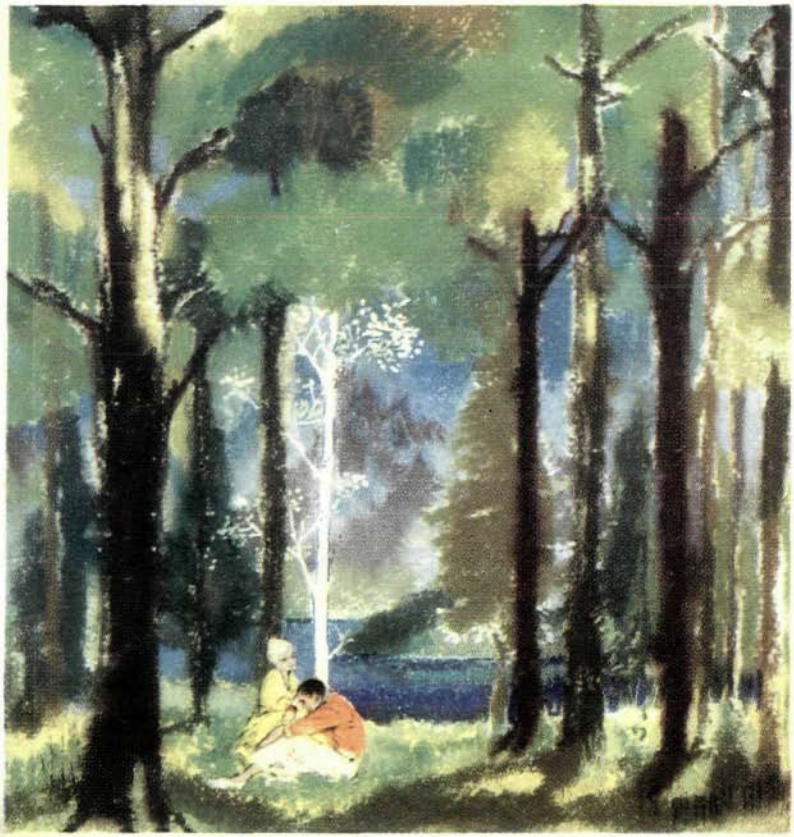

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Over now to you

THE MYSTERY MAN BEHIND THE BEST-SELLERS

ONE of the most fascinating mysteries of twentieth-century literature lies behind a story in this month's Argosy. The story: *Midnight Call*, which is here published in Britain for the first time. The author: B. Traven.

Who is "B. Traven"? That is the mystery of a man whose books have been translated into thirty languages and have sold in millions around the world—yet a man whose real name is still a secret, whose face is unknown to almost everyone except a few Mexican Indians.

One day, more than thirty years ago, an editor opened a brown-paper parcel which had arrived on his desk. It had been posted from a remote Mexican village. Inside was a manuscript bearing the invented name of B. Traven. And from that day to this, the identity of a remarkable writer has been hidden behind a fog of rumours—and behind all the half-truths and untruths and speculations there has remained the steel wall of the man's own determined anonymity.

Some say that he is a German—a doctor who fled from the Nazis and who for years has spent his life alone, in a house built with his own hands, in a Mexican forest, writing and tending to Mexicans. Some say that he was a young political writer who fled from a Bavarian death sentence. He has been said to be a publisher, a politician.

The German myths are the most persistent ones, and this is probably because his first work was written in German (although the author himself subsequently made the translations into English). His first traceable appearance in print was a serial in a Berlin newspaper, and his great novel, *The Death-Ship*, was first published in Germany, in 1926 (and sold

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more than 200,000 copies there before the Nazis banned it).

A number of his books have been about the sea—and one of the few authoritative facts about B. Traven is that he knows the sea and a seaman's life at first hand—as a child, he was a cabin boy. More of his novels are about Mexico—and the other fact about B. Traven is that he knows Mexico at first hand and has lived there in extreme privacy for many years.

To try to pierce the veil, experts have studied his chosen pen-name, and there are some who speculate that "Traven" is derived from *Trau-en*, the German for "trust in." B. Traven —Believe in me: that is one theory.

What does the B. stand for? Nothing, presumably. Traven himself once wrote in a letter that his first name "is not Bruno; neither is it Ben, nor Benno."

Those who have sought a clue to the man from studying his signature have been equally foiled: the name at the foot of his few letters is either typewritten, or indecipherable.

Rather more than a year ago, the distinguished U.S. publication, *Texas Quarterly*, in the course of a biographical study authorised by Traven himself, stated that the author was an American, born in Chicago of impoverished Scandinavian parents; that he went to work at the age of seven, to sea at the age of ten; that when he settled in Mexico he picked cotton, drilled oil, drove cattle, mined, trapped, guided, explored, taught—and wrote.

The full story of the man behind the name will probably never be known: it is his own wish that the world should find him only in his books. There have been sixteen of them so far—vastly popular on the Continent; less widely known in Britain and the United States. Several of them have been filmed, and the most famous was John Huston's classic, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre.*

Hidden in his unknown Mexican village, B. Traven writes on, and every once in a while posts a manuscript off to his agent in Mexico City ... another story of violence and compassion, of realism and understanding, of adventure and gentle humour. He has not had a novel published in Britain since 1961; his next is hoped for later this year.

Argosy presents B. Traven's *Midnight Call* in this issue as an introduction for those readers who do not yet know his work; as a recapturing of its special flavour for those who enjoyed such books as *Sierra Madre*, or *Rebellion of the Hanged*; and as a gesture to a man who lives—and writes—his own life in his own way.

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A new story by a brilliant author at his bittersweet best

The Wedding Party

by

H. E. BATES

MIKE HILLYARD stood on the terrace of the hotel, leaning on a long stone balustrade under which big beds of scarlet salvia were fiery in the thunder gloom of late afternoon, idly watching the lake and the mountains beyond.

A mountain shaped exactly like a sugar cone rose from straight across the water, wreathed at the very top with a grey halo of cloud. From the foot of it, every minute or so, storm signals darted out like orange soundless fireworks. The gloom was almost purple, the lake water momentarily iridescent where low light from breaking cloud struck it. Far off, a solitary slip of sunlight caught a single low alpine meadow and turned it into a flag of such luminous emerald brilliance that it too might have been some sort of signal to the opposite shore. Behind the hotel the tempestuous rain of early afternoon had turned a mountain stream into a ferocious white-green torrent that he could hear crashing down its many waterfall steps like a continuous echo of the earlier thunder.

Suddenly, from behind a high perpendicular crag of rock, a steamer slid into sight, a gigantic snow-white swan dressed with many-coloured bunting. As it came nearer he could just hear from it, above the noise of the waterfall, the sound of someone playing a guitar and then of people singing.

Even more suddenly the steamer performed a strange miracle. It laid on the water a vast clutch of eggs, a hundred or more in pink and blue and green and scarlet and mauve. As they floated and bobbed and

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spread in its wake, a boat propelled by two boys in blue swimming-trunks darted out from the shore, followed by another and another until there were half a dozen of them, chasing joyfully the stream of retreating balloons.

On the bridge of the steamer the figure of a heavy man in morning dress appeared, a bright red rose in his buttonhole, a waving champagne bottle in one hand: a figure gross and gay, shouting stentorian nothings to the shore. Presently it was joined by two others, also bearing bottles, and this tipsy brotherhood of triplets began to sing, in German, some loud bellying song.

Below, on deck, cameras flashed and many people were dancing: the men florid, the women gay and flowery, some wearing fur wraps against the cooling evening air. In the saloon a vast quantity of food was spread out on white-clothed tables jewelled with half-empty glasses, wine bottles and pyramids of pink and yellow roses.

On the bridge a tipsy hand pulled at a cord, and for fully half a minute the blast of the steamer's siren completely drowned the chatter of voices, the sound of the guitar, the waterfall and the wild stentorian song.

A moment or two later the steamer bumped against the jetty piles. Two gangways rattled across to the landing stage. A laughing menagerie of passengers emerged, more cameras flashing, the men like so many penguins, among them all a young bride in a cream lace head-dress, carrying a bouquet of white and yellow roses. She stood there for some moments looking slightly bewildered, even forlorn, until at last she was joined by the man of stentorian voice from the bridge, still carrying the champagne bottle in his hand. In the final moment as she took his arm, another rasping blast from the steamer's siren split the air, the long repetition of its echoes talking its way across the mountains until finally lost somewhere far away in cloud-hidden snows.

Hillyard suddenly found the frock-coated concierge of the hotel at his side. "A gay scene," Hillyard said.

"A big, important wedding, sir. The daughter of a big business man. Manufacturer of soap. Did you not see the steamer when it left earlier in the afternoon, sir?"

"No, I didn't see it. I went for a walk in the woods this afternoon. Where has the steamer been?"

"Oh, simply for a tour of the lake, sir. For eating and drinking and dancing and making a good time."

"And now what happens?"

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"Oh, more eating and drinking and dancing, sir. More good times. More fun. Excuse me now, sir—"

Alone again, Hillyard watched the last of the passengers leave the steamer. As they came ashore, he was struck by the fact that a fair-haired girl in a deep green and purple dress was the only one among them not laughing. She momentarily hesitated halfway across the gangway, looked back, seemed as if she had forgotten something and then suddenly looked up at him and held him for a fraction of a minute in a steady stare.

For a second or two he was half tempted to smile back at her. But there was no hint of invitation on her face; only the stare that might have been appealing, slightly resentful or merely curious. He couldn't tell at all and a moment later she moved on, crossed the landing stage, all alone, and disappeared.

A white-coated platoon of waiters now began to bear impossible masses of uneaten food from the steamer; vast platters of cold salmon, cold sucking-pigs, roast turkeys, fiery lobsters, great boulders of brown-red beef. At one stage some extravagant piece of iced confection conjured into the shape of a much-turreted *Schloss* appeared, all pink and soap-like itself, that took the strength of two waiters to carry it away. Lavish baths of fresh strawberries followed, drowned in cream, and finally a great coloured cornucopia of fruit, shaped like a gold canoe, that needed the strength of four men.

As the last of the drifting balloons floated away across the lake like tiny waning moons in the growing gloom of evening, he turned and went into the hotel. It was time for a drink, he thought, and started to make his way to the bar. It was a very nice bar, cool and roomy, with pleasant green tanks of tropical fish set about the walls, and it was his favourite habit to sit there for an hour every evening and drink a glass or two of hock and read or write postcards.

Now as he went upstairs to it, he was suddenly assailed by the amplified shrieks of a parrot-house. The wedding menagerie had taken over.

He was first annoyed, then abruptly, hotly angry. He turned with intense impatience and, not looking where he was going, started to go back downstairs. Halfway down he managed to avoid a collision with a man escorting a dark-haired girl upstairs and then, a moment later, actually struck with his elbow a second girl coming slowly up behind, half swivelling her against the wall.

For the second time the girl in the green and purple dress

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held him in that half-accusatory and half-appealing stare.

"I am most terribly, terribly sorry," he said.

"It is quite all right."

"It was very clumsy of me. I do apologise. I wasn't looking where I was going."

"There is no need. I wasn't looking where I was going either."

He stood awkward and embarrassed. He hoped she would smile but she gave, for the second time, no hint of a smile.

"Please," he said, and suddenly stood aside to let her pass. "I'm sorry. You want to get to your party."

This time she did smile, but with the merest twist of her lips.

"Why should you think I want to go to the party?"

"I simply—don't you?"

"No."

"Not really? After someone has taken so much trouble?"

"Oh yes! Someone has taken a great deal of trouble."

All this time he had been struck by the excellence of her English and now said, "Your English is exceptionally good. Have you been to England?"

"No."

"You have hardly any accent at all."

"My education was a very expensive one."

He stood aside to let another couple pass upstairs.

The man gave a short formal bow, but the girl in the green and purple dress made no movement in answer.

At this moment he had half a mind to beg her to excuse him and take his leave, but she said, "And where were you going in such a great hurry?"

He explained about the bar. "And then the menagerie—"

"The what? Oh yes, the menagerie. The wild animals. That's good."

Now she lifted her head slightly, in an attitude of listening, the twist of her lips very slightly cynical, and it might have been that she was listening to the sound of the menagerie for the first time. Then she said, "If it was a drink you wanted, the *Stube* behind the hotel is nice. It's very quiet there."

"I know. I go there sometimes for a change. They have a very good Niersteiner there."

"Ah! You like Niersteiner?" She smiled again, but pleasantly now. "I like Niersteiner too."

A few minutes later they were sitting on the bare, simple wooden settles of the *Stube*.

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"And who is being married today?"

At first she didn't answer. She sat staring into her glass. The wine, frosty, pale and green, had arrived in big deep glasses, almost goblets, and she might have been staring into the depths of a well.

At last she said, "My sister. The youngest one. Trudi."

He was about to ask her the troublesome question as to why she didn't want to go to the party, when he suddenly remembered that sometimes girls, driven by resentment, jealousy, or mere pique, act in the strangest fashion on their sisters' wedding days. It might even have been, he thought, that she was wearing the dark green dress out of sheer obstinacy or perhaps the desire for a little limelight too.

Instead of speaking he sipped at his wine and looked at her, first at her bare arms, then at her face. Her skin was shining, golden and incredibly smooth. The arms were quite hairless. Her very light yellow hair was very smooth too and she wore it piled up, the effect being to make her seem taller than she really was. Her eyes were an extraordinarily pale transparent blue and reminded him very much of a big-belled campanula he had seen growing high up between the lake and the snows.

Suddenly she said, rather absently, "What is that sound I can hear all the time?"

"Oh, that? The waterfalls. There are nine or ten of them."

"Oh yes, of course. I remember now."

"Do you know the valley up there? I walk up there every day. It's a favourite walk of mine. For a time it's all crash and bang and excitement with the water rushing down, and then gradually it's wonderfully quiet. Absolutely still. Nothing but trees and masses of meadow flowers and crowds of butterflies."

She laughed. "Just like getting away from the menagerie."

"Just like that."

She drank rather deeply at her wine, said how good she thought it was and then asked, "How long have you been here?"

"Ten days."

"And after this? Back to England?"

He said no, he didn't think so. He thought of going first to Salzburg, then Vienna and then, at the very last, to Venice.

"Venice."

"You know it?"

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"I'm afraid not."

"All that expensive education but no Venice."

"It was a very dull education." She again gave him that brief, rather twisted smile. "Excitements like Venice were not in the curriculum."

"Yes, it's exciting, Venice."

"I always wanted to go there."

By now it was getting dark. Already lights were on in the *stube* and now they also began to come on in the street outside. Little chains of them began to break out on the hillsides.

He then noticed that her glass was almost empty. He at once said he would order more wine—that was unless she felt she should get back to the party now?

"Are you anxious I should get back to the party?"

"No. It wasn't that. It was just that I thought they might think it odd—"

"They know how I feel."

He ordered more wine. It came again in the big goblet-like glasses. He picked up his, raised it, looking straight at her, and said, "Well, since you are not going to the party may I at least toast the bride and bridegroom?"

"The bride, but not the bridegroom."

So this, he said, was the reason for it all.

"Partly. But it isn't quite so simple as that."

He now recalled the image of the bridegroom: the gay, gross, champagne-waving German of stentorian voice, part of the coarse triplet brotherhood on the bridge of the steamer.

"So it's him you don't like? I could understand that—"

"Like him? Heinrich? That monster? God above, I hate him." A flurry of anger rushed through her face; the restless eyes actually seemed to darken a shade or two, quite bruised. "Oh, for heaven's sake, don't let's talk about it. Let's talk about something decent. Those butterflies or something. Are you very fond of that sort of thing—butterflies—flowers—"

"I'm sorry I spoke about the bridegroom. I apologise. I didn't intend to upset you."

"Oh, please don't keep apologising."

He sipped, in silence, at his wine. He suddenly felt the intrusion on her privacy, painful as it was, to be far more of an embarrassment to himself than to her. He felt caught in a deadlock, wretched, completely at a loss for anything to say, but a moment later she gave the most embalming of

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smiles, quite without bitterness, and said, "'Never speak to strange men,' my English governess used to say. 'No good can ever come of it.' But it isn't always quite true, is it? It's been a great comfort to talk to you."

He laughed and sipped at his wine. "When I came out of that bar I didn't exactly see myself in the role of comforter."

"Well, here you are anyway."

As she said this she leaned forward, put her arms on the table and looked him quietly full in the face. For a second or two he caught sight of the shadow between her breasts. Against the dark green-and-purple of her dress the skin of the upper curves of them looked paler than ever.

For some time after that they sat without talking, simply sipping wine and looking at each other. All the time he felt a gentle tension building up inside himself, whereas she, by contrast, seemed to grow a little more calm, the cynical restlessness dropping away.

It was she who broke the silence at last by saying, "I don't think I've ever met a man before who was interested in butterflies."

"Oh, I just like them, that's all."

"I think you're a sensitive person. By the way, what is your name?"

He told her. "Mike. And you?"

"Heidi."

A quick spasm of hunger, kindled by the wine, suddenly rippled through him.

"Would you care to have something to eat?" he said. "They serve a few things here. Or couldn't you face it after that feast on the steamer?"

"I didn't eat much. Yes: perhaps a sandwich would be nice."

"I'll call the girl."

Then she said, "And afterwards perhaps we might walk a little way and listen to the waterfalls?"

"I hate to bring up the subject of the party again," he said, "but are you really not going back?"

"Really not."

"In that case I've got a better idea. We'll ask the girl to pack the sandwiches and I'll buy a bottle of Niersteiner and borrow some glasses. It's such a warm evening. There's a hut up there."

For some distance up the path going up by the waterfall

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there were lights at intervals, but beyond the last of the houses and the wooden cattle barns the steep little valley was all darkness except for a great spread of summer stars and the candescent flash of the thundering falls.

As the sound of the falls finally died away a great silence clenched itself on the hillside, broken only by an occasional plop of water falling from a bough in woods still drenched with rain.

In that profound singing silence he stopped once and said, "Do you notice anything strange?"

"No. I don't think so. What?"

"You can't hear the water any more. You see, the stream comes out of the mountainside."

The hut was no more than an open wooden shelter. The air was damp and warm and sharp with the odour of pines. The sandwiches, of ham and *Leberwurst,* were laid on thick open panels of half-dark bread.

"Venice. Tell me about Venice."

He talked for a time about Venice. It was always about to change, everyone was always telling you, but really it never did. Since the war he had been there half a dozen times and really it hardly changed at all. He told her of an island, across the lagoon, where a big old *trattoria,* cool as a cellar, sat in a garden of vines, oleanders and pomegranate trees. You could eat in the shade of great walnut trees and drink ice-cold wine with peaches floating in it.

"That sounds exciting."

"It is. Why don't you go and see it for yourself?"

"I?"

"With me, I mean. I'd go tomorrow if—"

She gave a positive crow of laughter.

"We meet on the hotel staircase. Total strangers. You English, I German. And in ten minutes you are asking me to run away with you."

"And why not?"

"Eat your sandwich. You said how hungry you were. And do be sensible."

"I am very, very, sensible."

Below them lights ringed the lake in a series of irregular necklaces. The air had cleared itself of cloud. On the summit of the sugar-cone mountain a light burnt like a crimson-yellow star.

"I wish now we'd brought two bottles of wine," he said. "It's so good."

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Again she gave that high crow of laughter.

"There you go again. One bottle takes us to Venice," she said, and once again she laughed, "and where do we go with two? Heavens, how right my governess was—"

He was about to say that he liked to hear her laugh when, for some reason, it struck him that she was laughing too much and that the laughter, perhaps, wasn't as joyful as it seemed.

"Oh, there are plenty of places— Good God!" He suddenly leapt to his feet. "Look—your steamer's sailing. It's going without you. Now what do you do?"

"Oh! Yes, I know." She was quite unmoved. "It's going home to bed. There will be cars to pick us up in the morning."

He sat down again, watching the lights of the steamer as she drifted down the lake and remembering at the same time that impossible, gargantuan feast of food. "I suppose the day has been a little expensive for your father?"

Immediately she became very quiet. It was too dark in the hut to see the expression on her face but suddenly he sensed some new and deeper disturbance in the air. It was fully a minute before she said simply, "My father is dead."

For an awkward moment or two he could think of nothing to say. Below, the steamer seemed abruptly to be cut in half, partially concealed by some promontory of rock on the shore, and then disappeared altogether.

"Would you have gone to the party if your father had been here?"

"Oh, that would have been quite different." The tone of her words, not merely sad but aching, made him sense that his guess about the laughter had been right after all. "But then if my father had been here, there wouldn't have been any wedding."

He said quietly that he didn't understand her. She laid the remaining half of her sandwich on the bench, clearly not wanting it, and sat with her glass in her hands.

"You saw Heinrich?" Yes, he remembered Heinrich, of the coarse stentorian brotherhood. "One of the other men is his brother. Hermann. He is married to my elder sister."

He sipped slowly at his wine, merely listening, and then was abruptly shocked to hear her say in a low voice entirely without vehemence but infinitely more startling than if she had yelled the words, "They killed my father, the two of them."

And then as if this statement were not brutal enough in itself she added, with the same devastating quietness, "And yesterday I was all prepared to kill Heinrich."

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Her laughter and all his gay thoughts of Venice seemed an ashen mockery. He was gripped by two sudden fears: first that she was unbalanced, then that she was the victim of some monstrous delusion that would trap her, before she was aware of it, into some irretrievable ghastly folly.

"You shouldn't talk like that. I don't believe it anyway."

"I don't care if you don't believe it. It happens to be true."

In that moment he had half a mind to insist that she pulled herself together, stopped talking outrageous stupidities and went straight back to the party. But in his mind it all sounded like some fatuous piece of preaching and instead he put one arm round her, his hand on the cool bare rim of her upper shoulder.

At once he felt the gentle tension in himself build up again. Suddenly he wanted to kiss her but he knew it was no moment to kiss her and she startled him again by the most bewildering of statements, "My mother and my sister are weak. My father had a vineyard—"

She went on to say that of course the vineyard was merely a sort of toy. It had nothing to do with the serious business of manufacturing soap and all that sort of thing. Her father had a vast enterprise. In the German way he worked like a ruthless demon to build and keep it up. He had about him young and energetic men like Hermann and Heinrich and he expected them to behave like ruthless demons too and, in time, under his guidance, they did. But the vineyard was always there too, a toy, a safety valve.

He was very fond of the vineyard. He liked to go there, especially in autumn, and climb up to the highest of the terraces and sit there, shut away from the pressure of affairs, and contemplate the grapes and the valley below. The grapes in that particular valley were allowed to hang on the vines until very late in the year, sometimes until almost December, and then were picked with infinite care, one by one.

He didn't care for driving cars very much, and one early November day Hermann and Heinrich drove him in a big Mercedes up to the vineyard. It was a coldish day and the grapes were still hanging on the vines, golden-green, not yet ready for picking. Hermann at that time was already married to the elder sister and Heinrich had a shrewd and calculating eye on the younger.

"Have you ever gone around with the idea of killing somebody on your mind?"

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" Good God, I should hope not."

" It's a terrible, terrible thing."

In a sudden fit of anguish she turned and impulsively pressed her face against him. Without a word he held her head in both hands, his lips pressed against her hair. Then in a second agonised moment she turned and pressed her mouth very close to his and begged him piteously not to let her do anything mad. Yesterday she almost had. Yesterday she'd driven a crazy, tormented hundred miles or more, utterly alone with the tortured notion that she might murder someone and then kill herself too.

Now did he see why she didn't want to go to the party? It was hardly a time for gay celebration. Up in the vineyard, that cold afternoon, her father had had a heart attack: not very desperate, at first, it seemed. He was conscious and begged the boys to drive him home.

" Instead, Heinrich had the bright idea of driving ten miles to get a doctor. The calculating devils must have seen a kingdom falling into their laps. By the time they got back, nearly an hour later, he'd had a second attack. He died in the car."

Impulsively he kissed her on the lips.

It was more a gesture of comfort than anything else and she hardly seemed aware of it. When she spoke again it was as if she were finally attempting to purge herself of bitterness.

" I suppose it's really not Heinrich I hate most. It's my mother I can't forgive. She can see no wrong in them. They've got their kingdom now. They're the bosses. They've got what they wanted."

She then kissed him of her own accord. She thanked him and said something about how she hadn't been able to talk to a single soul about all this and how it had been far easier to talk to a stranger, except that now he didn't seem so much like a stranger.

" You probably know me better than I know myself now."

He folded her completely against him, putting his hand against one of her breasts. He was glad that she didn't push it away. He was glad too that she didn't start weeping. All she said was, " It's very nice being here with you."

A moment later he saw the light on the sugar-cone go suddenly out. He contemplated the dark mountain for a few moments in silence and then said, " Would you come to Venice tomorrow?"

" Oh, I couldn't."

" Why not?"

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"I have things to do."

"What things?"

"Oh, many—all kinds—"

Suddenly he slipped his hand into the open neck of her dress, running his fingers across her bare breast.

"Please," she said. "You're hurrying things. I'd like a little time—"

"Now is the time."

She became very quiet again. She seemed almost to go to sleep in his arms. Her head was low across his chest and he pressed his mouth against her hair. An unbelievable serenity flowered from all this and he lost completely all count of time until, drowsy himself, he roused up to hear somewhere down on the lakeside, a clock striking eleven.

"Are you awake?" he said. "I wondered if the *Stube* might still be open. We could have a *kirsch*—"

"That's a nice idea."

They started to walk slowly down the hillside. He couldn't tell what her thoughts were now but she seemed, at last, immensely at peace with herself. And then, some way beyond the lowest of the waterfalls, he stopped and held her lightly by the shoulders and looked at her face. "Come with me tomorrow."

"I can't make up my mind."

Jocularly he said why didn't they toss for it? He took a ten-*pfennig* piece from his pocket. Heads she would come with him, he joked, tails he would just take her away. Blithely he tossed the coin into the air, missed catching it again in the darkness and heard it go tinkling away down the road.

"Oh, God!" she suddenly said.

He had hardly time to wonder what this nervous exclamation was about before he heard, from the slopes down below, a raucous chorus of men's voices and a tramp of marching feet.

"Heidi! Heidi! Heidi! Heidi! Heidi!" they were shouting, all in drilled stentorian unison, and it might have been that they were shouting, "*Sieg Heil!*"

"Oh, God!" she said. "I half expected something like this. Let's run for the *Stube*—"

They had hardly started running before he saw the ordered squad of penguins pounding up the slope, wild and wine-fired, some waving bottles, some in fancy hats, some skeined about with coloured streamers and all shouting the one brassy stentorian word—"Heidi! Heidi! Heidi!"

Frightened now, she stopped and clutched him by his

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shoulders. "Listen. I will come tomorrow. I'll meet you here at seven—wait for me. I will come. But just at the moment—you won't be able to stop them—they've come to take me back—"

More like a pack of hunting dogs now the squad, suddenly catching sight of her, broke into disordered running, whooping and laughing. She gave him a single desperate kiss and then they were in for the kill, drunk and triumphant, yelling with evil idiocy, seizing her bodily and picking her up.

In that moment all his own rage came seething back and he started shouting, "God, you bastards! You bastards! You bastards!" flailing about with his fists. A second later, a bottle hit him behind one ear. He dropped to his knees, half stunned, and when he finally got to his feet, he knew it was no use any longer. They were already at the foot of the slope, running madly, carrying her away shoulder high, like someone on a bier.

In the morning, at seven o'clock, he walked slowly back up the slope. Some yards below the water-trough he caught sight of something glinting in the road and stooped and picked up the ten-*pfennig* piece he had dropped the night before.

Heads you come with me. Tails I just take you away—

He sat on the edge of the water-trough and waited, tossing the coin idly from one hand to another. There was a sharp chill in the air and once, when he dipped his hand into the water, he drew in his breath with shock. Gradually he heard the sound of all four quarters strike from the clock on the lakeside and then, soon after eight, he knew it was no use.

He walked back to the hotel. The concierge, outside the vestibule, was taking an early morning breath of air.

"Have all the wedding guests gone?"

"Yes, sir. All of them. Every one."

"What time did they leave?"

"Between five and six, sir. You mean you didn't hear them go, sir? They were very gay. They were very, very happy."

He turned away. The first of the day's steamers was sliding swan-like across the lake and after watching it for a moment or two he turned and stared at the waterfalls, the lower meadows rich with flowers, the high mountains and a solitary woman hanging out clothes in a garden, between rows of red currant bushes, shining crimson with ripening fruit.

But in reality he was neither watching nor listening to anything. All he could see were the eyes like palest blue campanulas; all he could hear was the echo of the voice of the girl with death in her heart.

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Saroyan after thirty years

Unknown and penniless, a young Californian sat down to the task of writing a story a day for one whole month. Why? Because he was sick of obscurity and poverty. The result was a book—*The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*—and success was instant. Now, thirty years and many books later, that same man, William Saroyan, looks back . . .

HOW long are thirty years, if they start when a man is twenty-five? Or how short? How much time is thirty years? What is the living distance between 1934 and 1964?

I certainly don't have a clear understanding of the thirty years I'm thinking about, or of myself inside the years, but at the same time I don't want them to have only gone by. I myself don't want to have only gone by, as each new day arrived and lingered a moment and was then gone, until the days were the days of thirty years, which at 365 days a year comes to 10,950 days, which is both a lot of days and hardly any at all. At a dollar a day, for instance, all of the days would come to only $10,950. I mean, what happened?

I nearly died every day, as everybody nearly dies every day, and great numbers actually die every day. But at the same time, drinking black coffee in the morning and lighting the first cigarette of the day, I nearly became unkillable every day, as everybody nearly does. I nearly became immortal, as everybody is always trying to become. I nearly got it, I was nearly with it, every day, for the simple reason that I was there. It was great, but I never quite knew what to do about it, except to light another cigarette.

Every day had a lot of perfection in it, a lot of fun and health, a lot of expectation and fulfillment, a lot of work and reward, a lot of purpose and achievement, a lot of cowboys and Indians whooping it up with yelps and howls, a lot of

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cops and robbers trying on right and wrong for size, a lot of rich and poor being superior and inferior about having and not having, a lot of science and invention sneaking in and out of the unknown, a lot of mathematics and music talking and screaming their heads off, a lot of philosophy and poetry stammering maledictions at everything else, a lot of Boy Scouts, a lot of Girl Scouts, a lot of Men Scouts, a lot of Women Scouts, a lot of Demented Scouts, Alcoholic Scouts, Good Scouts, Better Scouts, Best Scouts, and Supreme Scouts. Every day there was a lot of trying, and all of it was carefully documented by the newspapers and the news magazines, and placed in the archives.

It was fun, it was good clean wholesome American fun, and the four Marx Brothers of the Apocalypse rode horseless through the whole rigmarole, making unsuspecting little kids and oversuspecting mothers and fathers roar with laughter. And W. C. Fields told them not to despair. And Laurel and Hardy taught them how to get things simultaneously done and undone. And other comics all over the country reminded them again and again that it isn't possible or perhaps even necessary to understand anything.

We wrote it all, it's in all of our best books, and already the books are trash, although catalogued in the Library of Congress. And here I am, after thirty years, still trying to write it, as if it were perfectly reasonable and entirely possible to do so.

I can't even write accurately about the shape of a billiard ball, so here I am trying to write accurately about the shape of human experience over a period of thirty years. Well, it can't be done. Human experience isn't a shape at all. It's an explosion. It's one big explosion made up of many small explosions every day. A great timeless, spaceless, expanding explosion made up of thousands of explosions in every living human being every day, chain-reacting upon one another infinitely.

What we do all our lives is fight off death—boxing cleverly, or wrestling, as the fellows in the Old Testament wrestled with God. But it isn't accurate to call the opponent death, most likely, because death itself has never had very much accuracy to it, being a human invention with all kinds of contradictory meanings.

What we probably mean, what we have probably always meant, is that we have always been held to life, to ourselves,

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one at a time, to the truth and reality of each of us, by a tie that has always been vulnerable, a tie which might just break at any time, cutting us off and putting us over with the dead. We have been tied, each of us to himself, by a connective that has always been simultaneously just about right and not nearly enough, so that we have gone about in doubt, not knowing what's next, learning to forget our vulnerability and cultivating a belief that nothing can possibly surprise us. We have known from the beginning by instinct that we have been in a contest, and we have never quite understood the terms of the contest, or the rules of it, except that it can become deathly at any moment, by accident, disease, failure, or something else. We have always noticed living things being suddenly stopped all around us by accident, disease, failure, or something else, and hardly ever in a reasonable or meaningful manner. The whole area in which we have had our reality, the whole arena in which we have come to pass, has always been littered with the dead —in plants, animals, and human beings.

I even saw failure in junk—in broken parts of machinery, in furniture and household utensils, in buildings, houses, places, streets. Rot, rust, decay, collapse, breakage, and failure were everywhere. It wasn't sad, or certainly not sad alone, but it was depressing, and very early I found that I had an impulse, entirely foolish, to rescue finished things, to restore them, to bring them back to life. I suppose I felt the things were myself and I couldn't look upon them without feeling pain and despair. There were always also new things to look at, fresh and clean and colourful, and I looked at them, and rejoiced in them, but I could never forget the finished things, or believe that the new things would not soon join them. It didn't satisfy me that there was always plenty to maintain a balance, that as swiftly as old stuff changed to junk, new stuff was made and put about. I had no right or reason to grieve over the gone, and yet I mourned it bitterly. Well, then, what did we have that couldn't be made to go, that couldn't rust, rot, decay, break, fail, or change to the point of loss of identity?

We had art, and so I came to decide, little by little, that it would be by means of art, by means of writing, that I would fight my fight with death, with failure, with all of the stuff that was on the other side of the line that separated the right from the wrong, the whole from the broken, the good from the bad, the useful from the useless, and so on. But even after this decision had been reached, even after I knew what I wanted to do, what I wanted at any rate to try to do, and

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I had begun to work at it, the fight didn't stop. If anything, it became rougher and tougher than ever.

It wasn't easy to make art. Trying to make it was a new fight, or a brand-new aspect of the old fight. Even so, I kept after art, despairing every day, but at the same time little by little, year after year, moving steadily towards an improved potential for myself in relation to art, so that by January of 1934 I was able to believe that there could no longer be anything, accidental or inevitable, that would be likely to stop me, that would be likely to prevent me from writing, from making a beginning that would be just right for me, and would not only permit me to have that work to do for the rest of my life but also would compel me to do it.

Potential is really the thing that is always involved in everything. Get the right kind of potential established, and the consequence has got to be right, too. Get ready to write, in short, and it must follow that you will write. The writing itself won't be the difficult thing, but the maintaining of the potential will; it will always be the thing to be concerned about.

How long does it take a writer to establish for himself the right potential? Well, I have got to begin the answer by saying: Oh ho! It takes for ever, the for ever that is already gone, that has already been used up, that has accumulated in the past and in every man born into human life. And then it takes years of the living present, which as it lives is always now, so that in talking with kids who believe they want to write, I am obliged to tell them to be especially concerned about doing something about everything in the form of writing now, not later, even if that which is done now seems hopeless. Living is an act, more than it is a thought, and the making of art is an act. If you don't do something now, it will not be possible tomorrow to notice that you have done something.

At the same time the whole thing, the whole business of living, of making life, the whole business of making a potential, of making art, is very simple. And there is no fight, if you want to think of it that way. Death is nowhere near; there is no death at all, in fact. Death happened long ago, or birth, and so you are there, and who you are, and you have your way from the beginning, and you are the one you are, there is no other like you, and anything you do in living or in art is yourself, and the whole thing is wonderful and something to get up early in the morning about.

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TWO FOR A FARTHING

by TOM MACDONALD

THERE were still a few people in the late night cafés as Alf Perkins was walking up Kotze Street. He was dragging on a cigarette and letting the smoke go round his mouth before he blew it out. His mood wasn't too good. After they had come from a cinema, he and Marion had had a coffee and a cigarette and he had sat back watching the other coffee drinkers and cigarette smokers, and maybe there were a few dagga smokers among them, for this was Hillbrow, Johannesburg, and it was called "little Paris," and it was said that you'd find such a corner in many a Latin city.

Maybe that was true, but he only knew Johannesburg and he was just a comma in the rolling prose of the place. You could say that sitting in one of the cafés you could feel the pace of Hillbrow—cars were always thrumming along the streets, and the *putt-putt* of motor cycles and scooters. All this when most of Johannesburg was dead for the night. In the cafés were girls who you'd think should be in bed with their guardian angels hovering round their silly little heads, and supercilious youths with long hair and masks of faces—people from all over the world.

But it hadn't been a good night for him watching the people, because Marion had wanted him to go round the corner to see a bedroom suite. Walnut, she said. He wasn't ready for that suite yet. Hinting that it was about time they got married. Not bluntly, but just pushing him to look at furniture.

She had sulked. So he had taken her back to her flat and had said goodnight at the door. Now he was mooching along to his own little flat in Abel Road. Of course, as Marion had often said, two could live cheaper than one with

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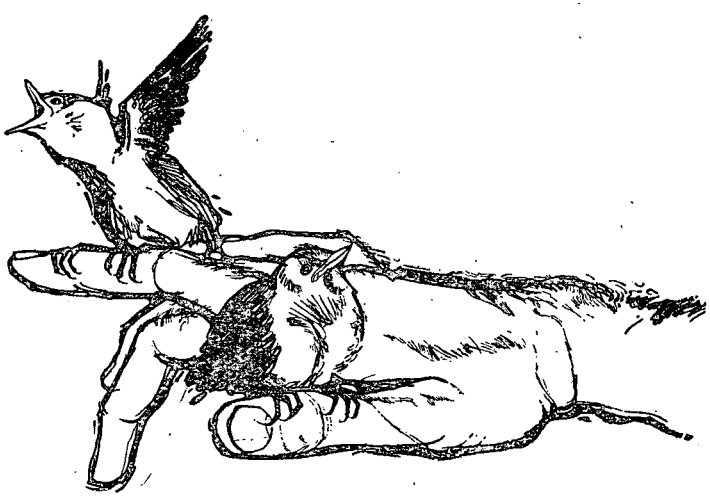
the rent of one tidy-sized flat instead of the rent for two poky ones. He would come round to that some day, but he wasn't ready for marriage yet. He didn't know why, unless he wanted to taste a little more freedom, not that he wanted anybody except Marion even though she had hinted that he didn't love her as he used to. What did she expect? You couldn't keep the first flush of love going all the time.

He had a good look at himself as he passed a shop window. He was average. A nice head of dark hair which had never known a hat, a tidy face, the nose a little too long perhaps, but he couldn't help that. He wasn't humpbacked. He wasn't a movie star by a long chalk. A girl wouldn't look at him twice except for Marion. That's why he was going round with her. In time they would marry, get that bigger flat and then maybe a house when the kids came. He wasn't going to raise kids in a flat. He and Marion thought the same about that.

Perhaps he should be a little more ambitious. But after all he was a good salesman and there was no reason why, in time, he wouldn't be a manager in one of the firm's outfitting stores. He knew the worth of cloth by fingering it. He liked selling shirts—they were so clean. If a man asked him to help him choose a tie to go with a suit he could do it in a flash. Yes, he was all right. He'd never be chairman of the Stock Exchange—so what? Marion would have to be



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patient. When he got his next rise he'd whisk her off her feet. Surprise her.

There was a sudden gust of wind. Winter, and he hadn't an overcoat. Marion was always at him to buy one. All women were like that, wanted to coddle their men. Winter. Maybe he would get a coat—wholesale. That was something. Now suddenly the wind was rising. That was Johannesburg for you. Best climate in the world, bang on the high *veld,* but it could hit you with sudden change and that was annoying.

He flung back his head as if he was seeing a brick hurtling down on him. But it wasn't. Just a bundle of dried grass or something. He could see it now. It was the ruins of a nest. But where did it come from? There wasn't a tree in sight.

He leaned down and picked it up. It moved. He took it to a lighted window. There were two little featherless birds in it. They looked terrible. He put the tip of his finger on one of the tiny bodies. It trembled.

He stood on the kerb with the nest in his hands. Two old people arm in arm, a fat old dog at their heels, were coming down the street. He must have looked an object of ouriosity for they stopped and stared at him.

"I just found this," he said, "a nest."

"But it's winter," said the woman, who was round of face and double-chinned. "Birds don't nest in winter."

"But here are two little orphan birds," he said, and he showed them.

"The poor little things," she said.

"They won't live," said the scrag of an old man. "How can they? They're no more than a day old."

"What shall I do with them?" asked Alf.

"Just throw them away. They can't live, I tell you," said the man.

"He can't do that. It'd be wicked," said the woman.

But they and the old dog just left him standing with the nest in his hands. He opened his jacket and put the nest against his shirt. He buttoned his jacket gently. Yes, it would be wicked to throw them away. Some alley cat would come out of the night and eat them if he abandoned them. He looked up at the checkerboard of flats, some with lighted windows, most of them dark. All those people cosy in their beds and here he was with two orphans on his hands. Perhaps he'd better drop them. No-one would notice. But he rejected the thought.

At Ingram's Corner there was an all-night chemist. After

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all, this was an emergency. The chemist might think of something. He put a hand gently against the nest under his jacket and hurried. The chemist—what was his name now? He had called on him one night with a vicious bout of indigestion. Mr. Friedman, he remembered.

He was glad of the shelter of the arcade where the cold wind was cut off. He walked into the shop. It was cosy, reassuring, with all the bottles on the shelves.

Mr. Friedman, in a white coat, was short, bald as glass on the top of his head and he wore strong lenses in his glasses. He lifted his face and smiled. Alf produced the nest. "Look," he said, "two baby birds. Fell at my feet from a tree or something, and I don't know what the hell to do."

"Little sparrows," said Mr. Friedman, peering at them.

"Birds eat worms, don't they?" asked Alf.

"I haven't got any worms," said Mr. Friedman. "In any case, baby birds can't eat worms. Couldn't digest them."

Alf saw Mr. Friedman's brow furrow. "I don't know," said Mr. Friedman, "some birds chew the food for their babies and then give it to them. You could try that."

"What food?" asked Alf.

"A little bread perhaps." Then Mr. Friedman shook his head. "No, that wouldn't do. It may choke them."

Alf could see him thinking and he wished he'd think a bit faster.

"You can't abandon them," said Mr. Friedman.

"I thought of that. I just couldn't."

Mr. Friedman looked him straight in the eyes. "I can see you're too much of a man to do that."

Alf's chest swelled.

Mr. Friedman rubbed his chin. "Well, what can we do?"

He spoke slowly and Alf wanted to shake him. The nest was on the counter and they saw the little beaks opening and shutting.

"They're hungry," said Alf.

"Terribly hungry," said Mr. Friedman. He opened his fat, clean hands. "Let's try vitamins, something with a high protein. That's meat, like worms. But look at them, they're so helpless. You'll have to subject them to forcible feeding—but gently at the same time."

Force and gentleness. Alf felt then that he, too, had every right to furrow his forehead.

Mr. Friedman looked at his shelves. Alf had always marvelled how chemists could remember a thousand things. Mr.

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Friedman picked off a wrapped packet. "This powder," he said, "is for human babies. You'll have to cut down on the teaspoonful. Just a little I should say, mix it with drops of milk. You'll need some Vitamin B liquid too." He picked a small bottle and Alf could see Mr. Friedman could have done that with his eyes closed. "And here's a little glucose." He put a finger to his forehead. "Now, you'll want an eye-dropper. Force open their throats and feed them with the dropper.'"

Something coiled in Alf's belly.

"It's rather expensive," said Mr. Friedman. "Lessee now." His eyes flicked over the items. "I'm afraid it comes to ten shillings. That's a lot of money when both of the birds are only worth a farthing. Tell you what I'll do. I'll pay half. I'd like to have an interest in these two sparrows. If you come back and tell me you've saved them I'll be very happy."

"Thank you," said Alf.

"Oh, there's something else," said Mr. Friedman suddenly. "That old nest will fall to pieces. We need a nice little bowl and, of course, cottonwool." He picked a nice, empty, pink powder-bowl, lined it with cottonwool even to half a little dome which he fixed with deft touches and sticky tape. Then he picked up the babies gently from the jumble of grass and put them into their new nest. "I only wish I had a tiny hot water bottle for them, too," he said.

"That's lovely," said Alf. "How much for the nest?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Friedman. "I'm only allowed to sell medicines at night. It's the law, you know."

Alf thanked him and hurried out. When he got to the flat and found it was chilly he switched on the heater. The room was soon warm. He mixed the protein with milk. Their little beaks were surprisingly strong. They were as stubborn as sin, but he got a little down them. He gave them tiny drops of Vitamin B and glucose, but most of it was spilt on their little, naked chests. He wiped their chests with cottonwool.

All of a sudden they went to sleep. Marvellous.

He went to bed but couldn't sleep. Half an hour later he got up, switched on the light. There they were with their beaks opening and shutting. Their eyes seemed glazed. He could just see the tiny beat of their hearts. He panicked.

He had been no good at all at the forcible feeding. The babies would die on his hands. He looked at the telephone.

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He was lucky to have one but it had been left by a previous tenant; to get a phone in crowded Hillbrow was like getting money out of a miser. So he had kept it.

He rang up Marion. He knew she would be fast asleep, but he saw himself putting two little dead birds into the ashcan in the morning and that decided him. Lucky Marion had a phone too. Girls in Johannesburg thought that telephones were a part of their wardrobe.

After dialling her number he heard the *grrrr* of her phone. She was answering now, drugged with sleep.

"You?" she shrilled. "Are you in an accident or something?"

"No. Listen."

"You've rung up to apologise. Well, it could have waited till morning. Startling me like this . . ."

"No, I'm in a mess. I've got two babies on my hands."

"What?" she screamed. "Babies?"

"Yes, bird babies, Marion. If you stop interrupting, I'll tell you. A nest dropped at my feet as I was going home."

"There are no nests in winter, and anyhow, where could a bird find a tree round here?"

"I don't know. But I picked up the birds. No feathers on them. Just born I suppose."

"Hatched," she said.

"All right, hatched. But, look Marion, I'm turning myself inside out trying to make them eat before they starve to death."

Then she laughed right into his ear. When he could get a word in he said, "It's nothing to laugh at, Marion. If these babies die . . ."

Now he knew she was rolling on the bed laughing her head off, and the phone dangling. He waited, mashing the cigarette in his mouth.

She came back. "Well, what?"

"You're a woman," he said, "maybe you know something about feeding birds—baby birds. Don't laugh," he warned in an angry voice. "Listen for a minute. Will you come and help me?"

"At this time of night?"

"Tomorrow'll be too late. Fling your clothes on. I'll be round for you. It's not far."

"Are you really serious, Alf?"

"Never been more serious in my life. I've bought a lot of expensive medicines from the all-night chemist."

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"For the birds?" she shouted.

"Yes, for the birds."

"This is really serious," she said. "All right, I'll come. What? No, I didn't say anything else. I just yawned and swallowed my bed."

Alf snorted into a laugh. He knelt by the nest, touched the birds and said, "You're going to be all right."

She was laughing on his arm as he brought her into the flat and she got him laughing too. But once she had caught sight of the baby birds, her grey eyes went all soft. "The little darlings," she said. She switched round on her knees. "Why didn't you call me before, you clot?"

"I was scared," said Alf.

"You should have come to me straight from the chemist." She stroked the heads of the birds. He told her quickly all about Mr. Friedman.

"What a lovely man," she said. "Now hand me the doings."

He had always thought she was lovely with her neat figure and her small, oval face. Nice legs, too.

"A little of the mash with the liquid," she said. "It's the only way."

She opened a beak with her small fingers and she got the food down. He could see the Adam's apples swell in the birds' throats. Did a bird have an Adam's apple?

"Now, don't you go and have hiccups," she said to the bird.

In the gentlest way she squeezed the beak close. The little black eye of the bird was shining. She did the same with its brother or sister. Now they were sleeping.

"The helpless little things," she said.

"Yes," said Alf, "and Mr. Friedman said that both of them were only worth a farthing."

"Somebody said that long before Mr. Friedman," she said.

"Who?"

Her forehead wrinkled. "I think it was Our Lord," she said. "It's in the Bible. My mother told me when I was a little girl. I loved to watch the sparrows on our lawn, and she said that Jesus Christ said that two sparrows were sold for a farthing, but not one fell but that the Father was aware of it. Fancy the birds being dropped at your feet, Alf. Makes you think, doesn't it?"

He nodded while he lit two cigarettes which he was holding in his mouth. He gave her one.

"Do you think they'll be all right?" he asked.

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"We'll have to feed them every hour to start with."

"Every hour, Marion?"

"Well, we can't lose them now. Go and have your rest, Cock Sparrow."

"You going to stay up?"

"I'll doze a bit," she said. "I'll come back during the lunch hour tomorrow to see how they're doing."

"You mean today, my girl."

He felt a little ashamed of going to rest, but she said, "Look at the ordeal you've had, finding these poor little things." She smiled at him. She always got the better of him. He went to bed. He couldn't help it, he just fell into a deep sleep.

She shook him awake in the morning. He remembered the sparrows. "How are they?" he asked.

"As well as can be expected," she said. "Come on, I've given them their breakfast and I've got yours ready."

What a girl! He saw the birds cosily asleep, and marvelled. He thought for a moment he would ring and tell the boss that he had a bad cold. He even suggested it to Marion.

"Don't be daft," she said, "the kids will be all right."

He liked that. Kids. He watched her feeding them again before he caught his bus. It looked so much easier now.

All the morning he was on tenterhooks and he wasn't happy until about half-past one, the telephone went and he replied in his business voice, "Men's Outfitters here."

"Mum and the two sparrows here," said Marion. "Speaking from the flat."

"Are they all right?" he gasped.

"They're almost growing feathers. Bye. I must be off. Don't know how I managed to get here at all."

They fed the birds, or at least she did, before they had supper and several times during the evening. At the last feed they tried to open their beaks to Marion's pleading.

"Can you manage the night?" she asked, yawning. "I've just got to sleep."

He took her home and hurried back. The birds were sleeping with their heads together and their little thin legs giving a twitch now and again. He woke up suddenly in the middle of the night and fed them, and he seemed to be getting the knack of it now.

Marion was back in the morning and she cried with delight because the fledglings knew what it was all about and there was no need to prise open their beaks.

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Within a few days some feathers appeared on them and they began to know how to eat. Their eyes were bright. Then they began to wobble on to their legs.

"The fluffy monsters," Alf said. "Look how greedy they are."

"You mean the fluffy darlings," she said. "How does it feel being a dad to a couple of sparrows?"

"Fine, and how does it feel to be a mum?"

"Fine. I wonder what would have happened to them if I hadn't been around?"

"What would have happened without the vitamins I bought for them?"

"They'd have curled up their little legs and just died."

Then the birds started standing on the edge of the nest, beaks wide open and squawking for food. The eye-dropper could be dispensed with. The sparrows ate out of the palm of the hand.

"What shall we call them? A doubler of a name."

"You mean a combination."

"Yes."

"But we don't know their gender."

"The cheekiest one must be a hen," he said. "The other one looks as if he'll grow a waistcoat some day, so he must be the cock."

"Jack and Jill," she suggested.

He grimaced.

"Or what about Pollux and Castor," she said. "Read about them in a school book once."

"Terrible," he said. "Darby and Joan."

"They're fledglings, not old birds," she said.

"Hope and Crosby."

"Don't be silly, they're two men."

They had booked to see the film *Cleopatra*. "What about Liz and Dick?" she asked in the bus.

"No, better still, Antony and Cleopatra." He nodded and squeezed her hand.

When they got home they named them.

Alf rang Mr. Friedman and invited him round for tea on Sunday. Mr. Friedman fussed over the birds.

"After all, you are their uncle," said Alf.

"I suppose I am," said Mr. Friedman, "but what will you do when they start flying?"

"We can't bear to think of it," said Marion.

"But, my dear, all birds must fly," said Mr. Friedman.

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Antony, or was it Cleopatra, hopped out of the nest. Alf put down his hand. The bird hopped on his finger and gave a little twitter.

"Her first word," murmured Marion.

The bird fell off his finger, fluttered and landed squarely on its toes.

"The first flight," said Mr. Friedman.

The birds wakened Alf at the first touch of dawn. If he turned on the other side hoping to snatch a few more minutes they began to clamour. There was no other word for it, he told Marion. One morning when he chopped up a boiled egg for them they cried for more.

For the first time in his life he wanted to push the future away. He had to face it, and Marion certainly wouldn't let him forget it; the birds would soon be flying. They were doing it now, from chair to chair. They landed on his head and pecked his ears gently. They landed on his shoulder. They cocked their heads when he called them.

"You know, you can't keep these birds in a poky flat," said Marion one night. "They can't be brought up on charity for the rest of their lives. Birds have to fend for themselves. Remember, not a sparrow falls . . ."

"What do you want me to do?"

"One morning you must take them to the balcony, say goodbye, and throw them into the air. They can fly."

"And how are they going to find food in Hillbrow? They'll starve."

"Why should they? There are other sparrows about."

"They haven't been brought up like other sparrows. They wouldn't know how to peck a living out of the streets."

"Well, there it is. It's a problem, of course. Now, if you had a garden it might be different."

"You know I haven't got a garden."

"Of course I know, you dumbbell."

"No need to be rude."

"Then why don't you think of a way out?"

"Why don't you?"

"I told you they should have a garden, and it should be a garden with trees. There they'd perch and twitter and if the silly little things couldn't feed themselves—well, they could ask for food. As they do now. In any case, there'd be crumbs on the lawn most times."

He smiled.

"What are you smiling at?" she challenged.

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"I thought for a moment you looked like a cat—a nice cat mind you."

She turned her face to one bird on her left shoulder and then to the other on her right.

"A garden . . ." he mused.

"Of course, there's always a cottage that goes with a garden," she said.

"I can't afford it," he said.

"We could rent a cottage cheaper than two flats."

"And the trees?"

"Yes, there's a tall mulberry and some apricot and peach trees."

"So you've seen the cottage," he said.

"Yes, an old girl who was having a hairdo told me about it. It's in Parkhurst."

"You move fast," he said.

"Well, we always said we wouldn't bring up kids in a flat, didn't we?"

"Yes, Marion."

She flicked Cleopatra from her shoulder and the sparrow flew to Alf.

"We could keep the window-top open and they could fly in from the cold if they wanted to. Imagine them in Hillbrow without shelter."

"When are we going to the cottage?" he asked.

"I've already paid a deposit on the rent."

He bounced into laughter. The sparrows twittered.

"I thought we'd just walk round and have a look at that suite," she said.

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PUN-DITS

"I have improved!" cried John in glee—
His teacher gave a haggard smiol;
"My boy, you're unique," said he,
"None else could play the bass so viol."

◆ ◆ ◆

Within this bin, the vintner lies,
And for his sin atones;
Where, one amongst a thousand Graves,
He rests his ancient Beaunes.

IVOR C. F. TREBY

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'A man was killed,' he reminded her

HOSTILE WITNESS

by Edith Pargeter

HALLORAN found her huddled in one of the deep chairs near the refreshment bar of London Airport, gazing with the immense calm of desperation at the dirty yellow drop-cloths of fog sealing the vast windows. As he crossed the glossy floor he marked again the translucent clarity of her abrupt cheekbones under the falling light, the lovely, pallid brow defaced by those urchin fringes of black hair, the soft, dispirited mouth drooping in resignation. Again he suffered that stab of recollection never quite recaptured, as though life and death hung upon remembering where he had seen her before, or what other face this sad little face recalled.

She looked up when he halted in front of her, but she did not speak.

"Mrs. Foyle—"

It was not her name, and she knew that he knew it. The focus of her eyes shortened, fixing in hopeless acceptance upon him.

"Who told you?"

"No-one, this time. You've been watched ever since the subpoena was served on you. I felt you might try to run. Believe me, it wouldn't have done him or you any good."

"No," she said, in the same dead voice, "I don't suppose it would. I don't suppose anything could, now."

"I'm taking you home. You heard the announcement—there'll be no more flying tonight. Better give me your ticket—I'll see to it for you."

She surrendered it mutely, the flimsy folder that should have taken her east to Vienna, eight hundred miles from the court

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where this man proposed to put Danny Foyle in the dock on a charge of murder—and her into the witness box to clinch his conviction. She walked by Halloran's side like a sleepwalker, his hand at her elbow, out into the pale, smothering darkness.

"Who told you I wasn't his wife?" Her voice came to him muffled by the fog. "Lili? It must have been! I never told anyone else. And he wouldn't. She claimed to be my friend! She was the only one who ever broke me down."

"She wanted to do what was right," Halloran said, holding open the door of the car.

"She wanted to hurt me. And to kill him, if she couldn't have him. What has all this to do with right and wrong?"

"A man was killed," he reminded her, "at Campiano's."

"Not by Danny." She added with a sort of distant wonder, "Do you call Campiano a man?"

"Legally, I have to."

The fog-lights burnt yellowly overhead like floating sunflowers; the car's fog-lamp groped gingerly along the tarmac, yard by painful yard.

She sat silent and still beside him. He dared not take his straining eyes from the yellow finger of the fog-lamp to cast a glance at her, yet he saw her clearly every moment of the time. Professional name, Jenny Black. Age, about twenty-four. Singer with Danny Foyle's band at Campiano's Club. In private life Mrs. Danny Foyle. Only she wasn't. She wore a wedding ring; they lived together in exemplary respectability; but alas, they weren't married. And just once in her life she'd allowed an intimate friend to learn her secret.

It would never have occurred to Halloran to investigate that alleged marriage—even for the purpose of a murder case, so permanent, so domestic did their association appear. He had been resigned to being unable to put Jenny Black in the witness box to testify, willing or unwilling, against the man who was regarded as her husband; and that had meant being resigned to the fact that he wouldn't get a conviction. Without the gun, and without an opportunity of extracting from her what she certainly knew, the case was bound to fail.

And in a way he hadn't really minded. Campiano was no loss. His removal from the world had made it safer for a great many people, and sweeter for all; while Danny Foyle was an inoffensive soul who wouldn't have harmed anyone if his hand hadn't been forced.

All the same, Halloran's professional pride hated an inconclusive case, and his career was dear to him. So what he had

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felt, when Lili Bell telephoned him with the tip to check up on the marriage, had been ninety per cent excitement and hope, and only ten per cent pity and regret for these two hapless people.

"Why couldn't you leave me alone?" she said. But she expected no answer. And in a moment: "You can't convict him."

"Without you, no. The charge would never stick. That's honest."

"If you can't convict him without my help," she said, "you'll certainly never get him with it."

"But he did it. Didn't he?"

"No," she said, too tired even to be emphatic about it any more.

"Why did you two never marry? Has Danny a wife living? Or have you a husband?"

No answer.

"Listen to me. I'm not trying to persecute either of you. I'd prefer to help you. On the face of it, this is murder, but if the circumstances are as I think they are, the charge might very well be reduced. We know what Campiano was, even if he did manage to stay out of our hands. We know all about Campiano's profitable sidelines. He specialised in drugs and girls, and he required every one of his employees to be safely tied into one of those rackets. And I'm willing to tell you exactly what I think happened that night.

"You and Danny haven't had a successful season, the competition's tough in the dance-band world unless you're outstanding, and Danny wasn't more than a competent performer. You couldn't afford to turn down the engagement at the club. But you wouldn't fall into line with Campiano. Danny wouldn't peddle either dope or you.

"Campiano didn't like that. So he began to hunt round for a hold over Danny. And unluckily he found one. Everybody at the club said how pleased he was with himself that night. He clapped Danny on the shoulder between numbers, and told him to come along to his back room in the break. He had something to talk over with him, something very funny. And Danny went.

"When the head waiter went in to take Campiano a personal message, ten minutes later, Campiano was dead on the carpet, with a bullet through him at point-blank range, and Danny was rummaging among the papers of his desk, to make sure he left no record in writing."

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"Danny told you the truth," said the tired voice beside his shoulder. "He was lying there dead when Danny went into the room. Someone else got there before him."

"So Danny says. But no-one else was seen to enter the room, from the time that Campiano went back there after his tour of the tables."

"If Danny shot him, what became of the gun? Why wasn't it still in the room? Or outside the window, or somewhere—not far—? It could have been thrown."

"That's what I should be asking you," said Halloran. He stole a glance at her pale profile. "You do see, don't you, that if Campiano was trying to blackmail Danny into joining his rackets, and Danny shot him on the spur of the moment with his own gun, then the more fully you tell your story the better chance he'll have?

"You'd much better tell me everything, Jenny. You know, because you were uneasy, and you followed Danny to the door and listened. Maybe you even looked inside. Maybe you saw the shot fired. Almost certainly you heard what passed and heard Campiano fall. Lili saw you standing hesitating outside the door. She says you hurried away when you saw her."

Her lashes lay on her cheeks, curiously light and golden to go with such black hair. "Tell me everything, and I'll do what I can to help," he said.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked. "To the police station?"

"No, no-one but myself knows anything about this. If you care to talk to me tonight, alone, it will be off the record. If you want to make an official statement afterwards, you can. I want you to have time to consider what you're doing."

"I have considered," she said. "Take me somewhere quiet, somewhere I can't be seen."

He threaded through slow, cautious traffic towards his own bachelor flat. "Here, across the courtyard. We'll have to walk the last bit. Hullo, it's turning to rain."

She fished out a pale square of chiffon from her bag, and twisted it about her head, knotting it loosely upon her neck. She walked beside him silently across the silent courtyard and up the narrow, cream-coloured staircase into his flat. He gave her a drink, but she only sat back in the wing-chair, nursing it in her slender hands, not looking anywhere except inwardly, at the misery of her life.

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"What did Danny do with the gun?"

"He never had a gun," she said.

"Very well, let's begin somewhere else. What was it Campiano had discovered? What was it he proposed holding over you two?"

The question was hardly out of his mouth before he saw the answer. He saw it as a sudden explosion of pale golden light, as she turned her head away from him with a movement of inexpressible pain. The pale brow, its unbecoming black bangs all thrust away under the yellow scarf, shone in the lamplight clear as pearl, and the knotted ends of primrose-coloured chiffon coiled softly on her neck, like a knot of fair silken hair . . . Like the hair she had dyed and mangled into that waif's coiffure of hers.

He felt his heart contract, remembering at last. One photograph full-face, one in profile. The sad, reserved eyes, the straight, shining hair, long and fine, the tired, lofty brow. Now he knew her! Simone Périchon, aged twenty-three, vanished from Lille, France, eighteen months ago. Wanted on suspicion of murdering her husband, Antoine Périchon, an unpleasant brute who made his living out of girls. Where had Danny Foyle's band been on tour that summer? Was Lille on his route? How had he got her into England? Not that it mattered. Everything was clear now. Why those two had never dared to marry; what Campiano had discovered and flourished over Danny's head like a whip!

"I see!" he said. "Simone Périchon!"

She showed no surprise, no alarm; she had expected nothing but discovery in the end, he felt sure.

"I didn't kill Antoine," she said wearily. Her hands looked so unaware of the glass they held that he got up and gently took it. He went back to his chair and waited. She was feeling brokenly in her handbag, groping for a handkerchief.

"Why couldn't you all have left me alone? I didn't kill Antoine. Not Antoine. If only you'd all let me alone, I should never have killed anyone—I never wanted to—"

He started incredulously forward out of his chair. Not a handkerchief. A gun. Campiano's gun! The long hand that levelled it was not trembling now. "Jenny—"

"—not even Campiano, certainly not you—I *liked* you!"

Springing towards her, far too late, he saw with the glittering clarity of all final things how the frozen mask of despair wept great, silent tears upon the delicate hand as she pulled the trigger.

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facing the MUSIC

Swans sing before they die—'twere no bad thing
Did certain persons die before they sing . . .

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Harris—singing: his voice appearing to come from the cellar, and suggesting the first low warnings of an approaching earthquake.

When I was young I served a term
As office-boy to an attorney's firm.

(Aside to pianist): It is too low, old man; we'll have that over again, if you don't mind.

Sings first two lines over again, in a high falsetto this time. Great surprise on the part of the audience. Nervous old lady near the fire begins to cry, and has to be led out.

Harris—continuing:

I swept the windows and I swept the door,
And I—

No—no, I cleaned the windows of the big front door. And I polished up the floor—no, dash it—I beg your pardon—funny thing, I can't think of that line. And I—and I— Oh, well, we'll get on to the chorus, and chance it—

And I diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-de,
Till now I am ruler of the Queen's navee.

Now then, chorus—it's the last two lines repeated, you know.

GENERAL CHORUS:

And he diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-diddle-dee'd
Till now he is ruler of the Queen's navee.

And Harris never sees what an ass he is making of himself . . .

JEROME K. JEROME, *Three Men in a Boat*

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Howling his Head off

A vile, beastly, rottenhead, foolbegotten, brazen-throated, pernicious, piggish, screaming, tearing, roaring, perplexing, splitmecrackle, crashmercriggle, insane ass of a woman is practising howling below stairs with a brute of a singing-master so horribly, that my head is nearly off.

EDWARD LEAR, *Letter to Lady Strachey*, 24 *January*, 1859

Singing Eye to Eye

Ustinov's part as Nero required him to sing... To prepare himself he attended the Rome Opera House for lessons... Ustinov had already grown his hair long for the Nero part and, as he entered, the rumour became current that he was a new tenor to take over a role in the opera. This was a rumour that was speedily dispelled once Ustinov began to sing.

The Maestro was frank: "Of course, three lessons is ridiculous. To teach you to sing I need six years." However, he attempted to cram all his experience into the three lessons and Ustinov has never forgotten some of his advice. After the first lesson, the Maestro told him, "Try to breathe with your forehead." After the second his instructions were: "Think with your diaphragm." And, after the last lesson: "Whatever you do, do not forget to sing with the eye."

GEOFFREY WILLANS, *Peter Ustinov*

Primer-Donna

I'd say it was passion,
Rather than verve,
When she sang so sweetly
Of "One Night of Lerve";
And Maud was asked
To come into the garding,
Without the begging
Of anyone's parding.
Waide were the gates flung,
(Waide were her lips),
'Eavy 'er 'eart 'ung,
(And 'eavy 'er 'ips).
Voice and music blend without friction—
But oh, how I wish somebody, somewhere, sometime,
had taught the poor girl something about
diction.

VICTOR FRANCIS

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No Laughing Matter

I was quite used to people singing songs. When there was a tea party at the vicarage, or I went to one at the major's or the doctor's, people always brought their music with them. They left it in the hall, so that it should not seem that they wanted to be asked to play or sing; but after tea the hostess asked them if they had brought it. They shyly admitted that they had, and if it was at the vicarage I was sent to fetch it. Sometimes a young lady would say that she had quite given up playing and hadn't brought anything with her, and then her mother would break in and say that *she* had brought it. But when they sang it was not comic songs; it was *I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby*, or *Goodnight, Beloved*, or *Queen of my Heart*.

Once at the annual concert at the Assembly Rooms, Smithson, the draper, had sung a comic song, and though the people at the back of the hall had applauded a great deal, the gentry had seen nothing funny in it. Perhaps there wasn't. Anyhow, before the next concert he was asked to be a little more careful about what he sang—"Remember there are ladies present, Mr. Smithson"—and so gave *The Death of Nelson*.

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM, *Cakes and Ale*

Without more ado, she plunged into the opening bars of *Pale Hands I Loved*. Her voice was a shrieking nasal soprano, subject to long passages of acute tremolo. After this, she passed on with scarcely a pause to *Less Than the Dust*. A deep oriental drumming filled the room, the piano shook, the aspidistra quivered in its pink china pot upon the bamboo stand, the beads on the overmantel shivered and winked, the photos clacked against the wall. Miss Robinson swooped up, swooped down, recklessly leaping ticklish intervals. It was a short but very intense song. At the close she was considerably exhausted. Beads of perspiration stood upon her large pale nose.

"Wonderful! Gosh, I wish I could sing and accompany myself..." said Olivia.

ROSAMOND LEHMANN, *Invitation to the Waltz*

Noteworthy

I like your singers well,
But hate them too, and for this reason,
Although they always sing in time,
They often sing quite out of season.

THOMAS HOOD

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MARITO IN CITTA*

by JOHN CHEEVER

SOME years ago there was a popular song in Italy called *Marito in Città*. The air was as simple and catching as a street song. The words went, *La móglie ce ne va, marito poverino, solo in cittàdina,* and dealt with the plight of a man alone, in the lighthearted and farcical manner that seems traditional, as if to be alone were an essentially comic situation such as getting tangled up in a trout line.

Mr. Estabrook had heard the song while travelling in Europe with his wife (fourteen days; ten cities) and some capricious tissue of his memory had taken an indelible impression of the words and the music. He had not forgotten it; indeed, it seemed that he could not forget it, although it was in conflict with his regard for the possibilities of aloneness.

The scene, the moment when his wife and four children left for the mountains, had the charm, the air of ordination, and the deceptive simplicity of an old-fashioned magazine cover. One could have guessed at it all—the summer morning, the station wagon, the bags, the clear-eyed children, some ceremonious observation of a change in the season, another ring in the planet's age.

He shook hands with his sons and kissed his wife and his daughters and watched the car move along the driveway with a feeling that this instant was momentous, that had he been given the power to scrutinize the forces that were involved he would have arrived at something like a revelation. The women and children of Rome, Paris, London and New York were, he knew, on their way to the highlands or the sea. It

* Which means *HUSBAND IN TOWN*

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was a weekday, and so he locked Scamper, the dog, into the kitchen and drove to the station singing, *Marito in città, la móglie ce ne va,* et cetera, et cetera.

One knows how it will go, of course; it will never quite transcend the farcical strictures of a street song, but Mr. Estabrook's aspirations were earnest, fresh and worth observing. He was familiar with the vast and evangelical literature of solitude, and he intended to exploit the weeks of his aloneness.

He could clean his telescope and study the stars. He could read. He could practise the Bach two-part variations on the piano. He could—so like an expatriate who claims that the limpidity and sometimes the anguish of his estrangement promises a high degree of self-discovery—learn more about himself. He would observe the migratory habits of birds, the changes in the garden, the clouds in the sky. He had a distinct image of himself, his powers of observation greatly heightened by the adventure of aloneness.

When he got home on his first night, he found that Scamper had got out of the kitchen and slept on a sofa in the living room, which he had covered with mud and hair. Scamper was a mongrel, the children's pet. Mr. Estabrook spoke reproachfully to the dog and turned up the sofa cushions. The next problem that he faced was one that is seldom touched on in the literature of solitude—the problem of his rudimentary appetites. This was to sound, in spite of himself, the note of low comedy, *O, marito in città.* He could imagine himself setting up his telescope in the garden at dusk, but he could not imagine who was going to feed this self-possessed figure.

He fried himself some eggs, but he found that he couldn't eat them. He made an Old-Fashioned cocktail with particular care and drank it. Then he returned to the eggs, but he still found them revolting. He drank another cocktail and approached the eggs from a different direction, but they were still repulsive. He gave the eggs to Scamper and drove out to the state highway, where there was a restaurant. The music when he entered the place, seemed as loud as parade music, and a waitress was standing on a chair, stringing curtains on to a rod. "I'll be with you in a minute," she said. "Sit down anywheres."

He chose a place at one of the forty empty tables. He was not actually disappointed in his situation, he had by design surrounded himself with a large number of men, women and children, and it was only natural that he should

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feel then, as he did, not alone but lonely. Considering the physical and spiritual repercussions of this condition, it seemed strange to him that there was only one word for it. He was lonely, and he was in pain. The food was not just bad; it seemed incredible. Here was that total absence of recollection that is the essence of tastelessness. He could eat nothing. He stirred up his stringy pepper steak and ordered some ice cream, to spare the feeling of the waitress. The food reminded him of all those who through clumsiness or bad luck must make their lives alone and eat this fare each night. It was frightening, and he went home.

Scamper had shifted from the dismantled sofa to a chair, whose light silk covering he had dirtied with hair and mud. "Bad Scamper," Mr. Estabrook said, and then he took those precautions to save the furniture that he was to repeat each night. He upended a footstool on the sofa, upended the silk chairs, put a wastebasket on the love seat in the hallway, and put the upholstered dining-room chairs upside-down on the table, as they do in restaurants when the floor is being mopped. With the lights off and everything upside-down, the permanence of his house was challenged, and he felt for a moment like a ghost who has come back to see time's ruin.

Lying in bed he thought, quite naturally, of his wife. He had learned, from experience, that it was sensible to make their separations ardent, and on the day but one before they left, he had declared himself; but Mrs. Estabrook was tired. On the next night, he declared himself again. Mrs. Estabrook seemed acquiescent, but what she then did was to go down to the kitchen, put four heavy blankets into the washing machine, blow a fuse, and flood the floor. Standing in the kitchen doorway, utterly unaccommodated, he wondered why she did this. She had merely meant to be elusive! Watching her, a dignified but rather heavy woman, mopping up the kitchen floor, he thought that she had wanted, like any nymph, to run through the bosky—dappled her back, the water flashing at her feet—and being short-winded these days, and there being no bosky, she had been reduced to putting blankets into a washing machine. It had never crossed his mind before that the passion to be elusive was as strong in her sex as the passion to pursue was in his. This glimpse of things moved him; contented him, in a way; but was, as it so happened, the only contentment he had that night.

The image of a cleanly, self-possessed man exploiting his solitude was not easy to come by, but then he had not

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expected that it would be. On the next night, he practised the two-part variations until eleven. On the night after that, he got out his telescope. He had been unable to solve the problem of feeding himself, and in the space of a week had lost more than fifteen pounds. His trousers, when he belted them in around his middle, gathered in folds like a shirt.

He took three pairs of trousers down to the dry cleaner's in the village. It was past closing time, but the proprietor was still there, a man crushed by life. He had torn Mrs. Hazelton's lace pillowcases and lost Mr. Fitch's silk shirts. His equipment was in hock, the union wanted health insurance, and everything he ate—even yoghurt—seemed to turn to fire in his œsophagus. He spoke despairingly to Mr. Estabrook.

"We don't keep a tailor on the premises no more, but there's a woman up on Maple Avenue who does alterations. Mrs. Zagreb. There's a sign in the window."

It was a dark night and that time of year when there are many fireflies. Maple Avenue was what it claimed to be, and the dense foliage doubled the darkness on the street. The house on the corner was frame, with a porch. The maples were so thick there that no grass grew on the lawn. There was a sign—ALTERATIONS—in the window. He rang a bell.

"Just a minute," someone called. The voice was strong and gay. A woman opened the door with one hand, rubbing a towel in her dark hair with the other. She seemed surprised to see him. "Come in," she said, "come in. I've just washed my hair." There was a small hall, and he followed her through this into a small living room.

"I have some trousers that I want taken in," he said. "Do you do that kind of thing?"

"I do everything," she laughed. "But why are you losing weight? Are you on a diet?"

She had put down her towel, but she continued to shake her hair and rough it with her fingers. She moved around the room while she talked, and seemed to fill the room with restlessness—a characteristic that might have annoyed him in someone else but that in her seemed graceful, fascinating, the prompting of some inner urgency.

"I'm not dieting," he said.

"You're not ill?" Her concern was swift and genuine; he might have been her oldest friend.

"Oh, no. It's just that I've been trying to cook for myself."

"Oh, you poor boy," she said. "Do you know your measurements?"

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"No."

"Well, we'll have to take them."

Moving, stirring the air and shaking her hair, she crossed the room and got a yellow tape measure from a drawer. In order to measure his waist she had to put her hands under his jacket—a gesture that seemed amorous. When the measure was around his waist, he put his arms around her waist and thrust himself against her. She merely laughed and shook her hair. Then she pushed him away lightly, much more like a promise than a rebuff. "Oh, no," she said, "not tonight, not tonight, my dear." She crossed the room and faced him from there. Her face was tender, and darkened with indecision, but when he came towards her she hung her head, shook it vigorously. "No, no, no," she said. "Not tonight. Please."

"But I can see you again?"

"Of course, but not tonight." She crossed the room and laid her hand against his cheek. "Now, you go," she said, "and I'll call you. You're very nice, but now you go."

He stumbled out of the door, stunned but feeling wonderfully important. He had been in the room three minutes, four at the most, and what had there been between them, this instantaneous recognition of their fitness as lovers? He had been excited when he first saw her—had been excited by her strong, gay voice. Why had they been able to move so effortlessly, so directly towards one another? And where was his sense of good and evil, his passionate desire to be worthy, manly, and, within his vows, chaste? He was a member of the Church of Christ, he was a member of the vestry, a devout and habitual communicant, sincerely sworn to defend the articles of faith. He had already committed a mortal sin. But driving under the maples and through the summer night, he could not, under the most intense examination, find anything in his instincts but goodness and magnanimity and a much enlarged sense of the world.

He struggled with some scrambled eggs, practised the variations, and tried to sleep. *O, marito in città!*

It was the memory of Mrs. Zagreb's front that tormented him. Its softness and fragrance seemed to hang in the air while he waited for sleep, it followed into his dreams, and when he woke his face seemed buried in Mrs. Zagreb's front, glistening like marble and tasting to his thirsty lips as various and soft as the airs of a summer night.

In the morning, he took a cold shower, but Mrs. Zagreb's front seemed merely to wait outside the shower curtain. It

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rested against his cheek as he drove to the train, read over his shoulder as he rode the eight thirty-three, jiggled along with him through the shuttle and the downtown train, and haunted him through the business day. He thought he was going mad.

As soon as he got home, he looked up her number in the *Social Register* that his wife kept by the telephone. This was a mistake, of course, but he found her number in a local directory and called her. "Your trousers are ready," she said. "You can come and get them whenever you want. Now, if you'd like."

She called for him to come in. He found her in the living room, and she handed him his trousers. Then he was shy and wondered if he hadn't invented the night before. Here, with his shyness, was the truth, and all the rest had been imagining. Here was a widowed seamstress handing some trousers to a lonely man, no longer young, in a frame house that needed paint on Maple Avenue. The world was ruled by common sense, legitimate passions and articles of faith.

She shook her head. This then was a mannerism and had nothing to do with washing her hair. She pushed it off her forehead; ran her fingers through the dark curls. "If you have time for a drink," she said, "there's everything in the kitchen."

"I'd love a drink," he said. "Will you have one with me?"

"I'll have a whisky and soda," she said.

Feeling sad, heavy-hearted, important, caught up on those streams of feeling that never surface, he went into the kitchen and made their drinks. When he came back into the room, she was sitting on a sofa, and he joined her there; seemed immersed in her mouth, as if it was a mælstrom; spun around thrice and sped down the length of some stupendous timelessness. The dialogue of sudden love doesn't seem to change much from country to country. We say across the pillow, in any language, "Hullo, hullo, hullo, hullo, hullo," as if we were involved in some interminable and tender trans-oceanic telephone conversation, and the adulteress, taking the adulterer into her arms, will cry, "Oh, my love, why are you so bitter?" She praised his hair, his neck, the declivity in his back. She smelled faintly of soap—no perfume—and when he said so she said softly, "But I never wear perfume when I'm going to make love."

They went side by side up the narrow stairs to her room—the largest room in a small house, but small at that, and

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sparsely furnished, like a room in a summer cottage, with old furniture that had been painted white and with a worn white rug. Her suppleness, her wiles, seemed to him like a staggering source of purity. He thought he had never known so pure, gallant, courageous and easy a spirit. So they kept saying, "Hullo, hullo, hullo, hullo," until three, when she made him leave.

He walked in his garden at half past three or four. There was a quarter moon, the air was soft and the light vaporous, the clouds formed like a beach and the stars were strewn among them like shells and moraine. Some flower that blooms in July—phlox or nicotiana—had scented the air, and the meaning of the vaporous light had not much changed since he was an adolescent; it now, as it had then, seemed to hold out the opportunities of romantic love. But what about the structures of his faith? He had broken a sacred commandment, broken it repeatedly, joyously, and would break it at every opportunity he was given; therefore, he had committed a mortal sin, and he must be denied the sacraments of his church.

But he could not alter the feeling that Mrs. Zagreb, in her knowledgeableness, represented uncommon purity and virtue. But if these were his genuine feelings, then he must resign from the vestry, the church, improvise his own schemes of good and evil, and look for a life beyond the articles of faith. Had he known other adulterers to take communion? He had. Was his church a social convenience, a sign of deliquescence and hypocrisy, a means of getting ahead? Were the stirring words said at weddings and funerals no more than customs?

Christened, reared, drilled in church dogma, the thought of giving up his faith was unimaginable. It was his best sense of the miraculousness of life, the receipt of a vigorous and omniscient love, widespread and incandescent as the light of day. Should he ask the suffragan bishop to reassess the ten commandments, to include in their prayers some special reference to the feelings of magnanimity and love that follow sexual engorgements?

He walked in the garden, conscious of the fact that she had at least given him the illusion of playing an important romantic role, a lead, a thrilling improvement over the sundry messengers, porters and clowns of monogamy, and there was no doubt about the fact that her praise had turned his head. Was her excitement over the declivity in his back cunning, sly,

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a pitiless exploitation of the enormous and deep-buried vanity in men? The sky had begun to lighten, and undressing for bed he looked at himself in the mirror. Yes, her praise had all been lies. His abdomen had a dismal sag. Or had it? He held it in, distended it, examined it full face and profile, and went to bed.

The next day was Saturday, and he made a schedule for himself. Cut the lawns, clip the hedges, split some firewood, and paint the storm windows. He worked contentedly until five, when he took a shower and made a drink. His plan was to scramble some eggs and, since the sky was clear, set up his telescope, but when he had finished his drink he went humbly to the telephone and called Mrs. Zagreb. He called her at intervals of fifteen minutes until after dark, and then he got into his car and drove over to Maple Avenue.

A light was burning in her bedroom. The rest of the house was dark. A large car with a state seal beside the licence plate was parked under the maples, and a chauffeur was asleep in the front seat.

He had been asked to take the collection at Holy Communion, and so he did, but, when he got to his knees to make his general confession, he could not admit that what he had done was an offence to divine majesty; the burden of his sins was not intolerable; the memory of them was anything but grievous. He improvised a heretical thanksgiving for the constancy and intelligence of his wife, the clear eyes of his children, and the suppleness of his mistress. He did not take communion, and when the priest fired a questioning look in his direction, he was tempted to say clearly, "I am unashamedly involved in an adultery." He read the papers until eleven, when he called Mrs. Zagreb and she said he could come whenever he wanted. He was there in ten minutes, and made her bones crack as soon as he entered the house. "I came by last night," he said.

"I thought you might," she said. "I know a lot of men. Do you mind?"

"Not at all," he said.

"Some day," she said, "I'm going to take a piece of paper and write on it everything that I know about men. And then I'll put it into the fireplace and burn it."

"You don't have a fireplace," he said.

"That's so," she said, but they said nothing much else for the rest of the afternoon and half the night but, "Hullo, hullo, hullo, hullo."

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When he came home the next evening, there was a letter from his wife on the hall table. He seemed to see directly through the envelope into its contents. In it she would explain intelligently and dispassionately that her old lover, Olney Pratt, had returned from Saudi Arabia and asked her to marry him. She wanted her freedom, and she hoped he would understand. She and Olney had never ceased loving one another, and they would be dishonest to their innermost selves if they denied this love another day. She was sure they could reach an agreement on the custody of the children. He had been a good provider and a patient man, but she did not wish ever to see him again.

He held the letter in his hand thinking that his wife's handwriting expressed her femininity, her intelligence, her depth; it was the hand of a woman asking for freedom. He tore the letter open, fully prepared to read about Olney Pratt, but he read instead: "Dear Lover-bear, the nights are *terribly* cold, and I *miss*..." On and on it went for two pages. He was still reading when the doorbell rang. It was Doris Hamilton, a neighbour.

"I know you don't answer the telephone, and I know you don't like to dine out," she said, "but I'm determined that you should have at least one good dinner this month, and I've come to shanghai you."

"Well," he said.

"Now you march upstairs and take a shower, and I'll make myself a drink," she said. "We're going to have hot boiled lobster. Aunt Molly sent down a bushel this morning, and you'll have to help us eat them. Eddie has to go to the doctor after dinner, and you can go home whenever you like."

He went upstairs and did as he was told. When he had changed and come down, she was in the living room with a drink, and they drove over to her house in separate cars. They dined by candlelight off a table in the garden, and, washed and in a clean duck suit, he found himself contented with the role he had so recently and so passionately abdicated. It was not a romantic lead, but it had some subtle prominence. After dinner, Eddie excused himself and went off to see his psychiatrist, as he did three nights each week.

"I don't suppose you've seen anyone," Doris said. "I don't suppose you know the gossip."

"I really haven't seen anyone."

"I know. I've heard you practising the piano. Well, Lisa Spinner is suing Frank, and suing the buttons off him."

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"Why?"

"Well, he's been carrying on with this disgusting slut, a perfectly disgusting woman. His older son, Ralph—he's a marvellous boy—saw them together in a restaurant. They were *feeding* each other. None of his children want to see him again."

"Men have had mistresses before," he said tentatively.

"Adultery is a mortal sin," she said gaily, "and was punished in many societies with death."

"Do you feel this strongly about divorce?"

"Oh, he had no intention of marrying the pig. He simply thought he could play his dirty games, humiliate, disgrace, and wound his family and return to their affections when he got bored. The divorce was not his idea. He's begged Lisa not to divorce him. I believe he's threatened to kill himself."

"I've known men," he said, "to divide their attentions between a mistress and a wife."

"I dare say you've never known it to be done successfully," she said.

The fell truth in this had never quite appeared to him. "Adultery is a commonplace," he said. "It is the subject of most of our literature, most of our plays, our movies. Popular songs are written about it."

"You wouldn't want to confuse your life with a French farce, would you?"

The authority with which she spoke astonished him. Here was the irresistibility of the lawful world, the varsity team, the best club. Suddenly, the image of Mrs. Zagreb's bedroom, whose bleakness had seemed to him so poignant, returned to him in an unsavoury light. He remembered that the window curtains were torn and that those hands that had so praised him were coarse and stubby. The promiscuity that he had thought to be the wellspring of her pureness now seemed to be an incurable illness. The kindnesses she had showed him seemed perverse and disgusting. She had grovelled before his nakedness. Sitting in the summer night, in his clean clothes, he thought of Mrs. Estabrook, serene and refreshed, leading her four intelligent and handsome children across some gallery in his head. Adultery was the raw material of farce, popular music, madness and self-destruction.

"It was terribly nice of you to have had me," he said. "And now I think I'll run along. I'll practise the piano before I go to bed."

"I'll listen," said Doris. "I can hear it across the garden."

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The telephone was ringing when he came in. "I'm alone," said Mrs. Zagreb, "and I thought you might like a drink." He was there in a few minutes, went once more to the bottom of the sea, into that stupendous timelessness, secured against the pain of living. But, when it was time to go, he said that he could not see her again.

"That's perfectly all right," she said. And then, "Did anyone ever fall in love with you?"

"Yes," he said, "once. It was a couple of years ago. I had to go out to Indianapolis to set up a training schedule, and I had to stay with these people—it was part of the job—and there was this terribly nice woman, and every time she saw me she'd start crying. She cried at breakfast. She cried all through cocktails and dinner. It was awful. I had to move to a hotel, and naturally, I couldn't ever tell anyone."

"Goodnight," she said, "goodnight and goodbye."

"Goodnight, my love," he said, "goodnight and goodbye."

His wife called the next night while he was setting up the telescope. Oh, what excitement! They were driving down the next day. His daughter was going to announce her engagement to Frank Emmet. They wanted to be married before Christmas. Photographs had to be taken, announcements sent to the papers, a tent must be rented, wine ordered, et cetera. And his son had won the sailboat races on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. "Goodnight, my darling," his wife said, and he fell into a chair, profoundly gratified at this requital of so many of his aspirations.

He loved his daughter, he liked Frank Emmet, he even liked Frank Emmet's parents, who were rich, and the thought of his beloved son at the tiller, bringing his boat down the last tack towards the committee launch, filled him with great cheer. And Mrs. Zagreb? She wouldn't know how to sail. She would get tangled up in the mainsheet, vomit to windward, and pass out in the cabin once they were past the point. She wouldn't know how to play tennis. Why, she wouldn't even know how to ski!

Then, watched by Scamper, he dismantled the living room. In the hallway, he put a wastebasket on the love seat. In the dining room, he upended the chairs on the table and turned out the lights. Walking through the dismantled house, he felt again the chill and bewilderment of someone who has come back to see time's ruin. Then he went up to bed, singing, *Marito in città, la móglie ce ne va, o, povero marito!*

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AS she climbed Birch Hill, Pat noticed that the young man in the red plaid shirt was still behind her, whistling softly through his teeth. She had first been aware of him at the railway station in town when she had said goodbye to the three friends who were so precipitously deserting her three days early; and again he had been nearby at the bus stop.

Four miles and half an hour later, he had climbed off the bus behind her and now she wondered idly where he was going. Even in midsummer few strangers came to the north shore of the lake and this was only June, when few of the cottages had been aired and opened. Summer would officially begin on Thursday, when her parents would arrive.

At the top of Birch Hill, Pat left the rough road and cut through to the path that led abruptly from the hill's crest down to the shore of the lake. As she reached the door of her family's cottage, she saw her neighbour, Mrs. Elphinstone, just

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vanishing into the woods. "Hullo there," she called. "Looking for me?"

Mrs. Elphinstone turned, leaning heavily on her cane. "Yes, dear," she said with a bright smile. "I'm afraid I came to complain again. The radio, you know—all that thumping last night. If I was only deaf instead of arthritic . . ."

"Oh, dear," Pat said sympathetically. "Honestly I'm sorry, Mrs. Elphinstone. I kept telling the girls how noise travels here, but with your cottage out of sight they never could believe you were there. It won't happen again, though—I've just seen them off at the station."

"Really?" Mrs. Elphinstone beamed. "Then why don't you have dinner with me tonight, dear?"

Pat hesitated. "Tomorrow might be better," she said cautiously. "I'm awfully tired."

"Well, if you get lonesome and change your mind, just run over and let me know." With a wave of her cane Mrs. Elphinstone turned and moved out of sight among the trees.

Pat fumbled in her purse for the key and inserted it in

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the lock. Once inside the house the wind from the lake slammed the door shut behind her—as usual—locking it. Pat turned and gave it the usual exasperated glance, then walked into her bedroom and slipped out of her shoes and cotton dress.

She found it more than irritating to face three days here alone when she had expected company until Thursday. It was what came of including in her invitation two classmates she scarcely knew. Tracy, her room mate at college, had been due in New York today—Pat had known this from the beginning—but Avis and Beth, obviously bored in such a secluded place without men, had only last night announced they must leave, too.

"A foul trick," Tracy had shouted from the train's open window, gesturing towards the girls behind her. "Pat, are you sure you're going to be all right until Thursday? It's

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by
DOROTHY GILMAN BUTTERS

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such a lonely place—you know I'd stay and keep you company if I could."

"Don't worry so much, I'll be fine," she had shouted back, wishing Tracy would lower her voice, because people were beginning to stare. As the train moved off she had turned, and bumped into the young man in a bright red plaid shirt. Murmuring, "I beg your pardon," she had sped from the station platform.

As she pulled on a shirt to match her shorts she heard the sound of pebbles crunching on the path outside and peered through the curtain to the back door, expecting to see Mrs. Elphinstone again. But it was the young man in the red shirt who had left the bus behind her.

I don't wonder he's lost, she thought, remembering the labyrinth of paths that led from cottage to cottage. She recalled that the back door had blown shut behind her as she came in, and that she needn't answer his knock if she didn't want to. And I don't want to, she decided crossly. Let him find someone else to ask.

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It was how she felt—still a little aggrieved at being left alone, and too aware of that aloneness just now to be pleasant, or even communicative.

The young man knocked again, rather aggressively this time, and she thought, "Well really! There was something a little insolent about the second knock and she was glad she had not gone to the door. She waited until he walked away before deciding—it was almost half-past one—to make herself lunch and iced tea.

She tiptoed into the kitchen, moving softly in her slippers to the window over the sink to make certain the young man had gone.

But he hadn't gone. He was sitting under a sumac tree not ten yards away, a piece of grass between his teeth. His eyes were fastened on the ground between them but she was so jarred by the sight of him calmly sitting there, so startled by his odd persistence that she jumped back from the window.

She knew at once this was a mistake; that he must have been aware of her sudden movement. She even thought she had seen the flicker of his eyelids as she jerked out of sight.

She pressed herself against the wall next to the door, trying to tell herself that he couldn't possibly have seen her but wishing she hadn't been careless because now he might stay longer and she'd have to go on pretending she wasn't here.

The young man moved. She heard him push away the blackberry vines under the kitchen window, heard the snap of twigs, and then to her astonishment his face pressed itself against the screen and blotted out the light as he peered inside.

He couldn't see her. He could see—she cautiously turned her head to look—he could see the back wall of the kitchen opposite him: the refrigerator, the kerosene stove beside it and the rough shelves that held the canned foods. He would probably guess that the half-opened door in the left wall concealed the tiny bathroom. Beneath the window he would see the rim of the sink and a corner of the linoleum-covered counter. Then came the back door—windowless, made of rough boards—but he would not be able to see the wall against which she stood.

He remained there for what seemed an eternity of time, as if he had to learn what had moved, or must memorise everything he saw in the room. But why would he want to do that?

When his head left the window she heard the blackberry vines scrape the shingles as he moved through them to the

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back door. The latch next to her began to move up and down softly—and then demandingly.

"The important thing to remember," she told herself through clenched teeth, "is that he doesn't know anybody is in this house. People do strange things when they don't realise they're being watched."

It occurred to her that next he might go to the side door and she wondered if it were securely locked. There was also a small window in that side door. She was going to have to reach it before he did and draw the muslin curtains across the window or she would be denied any freedom of movement in the house until he went away. If she didn't, he could stand there looking into the living room for as long as it pleased him.

The thought of leaving this wall obscurely frightened her. It was a feeling she had never had before, an almost primeval insistence that open spaces be avoided.

She wished Mrs. Elphinstone would come back. It was this abnormal silence that was getting on her nerves she decided, the feeling of being here in the cottage and yet unable to take possession.

"You've got to move now," she told herself, and suddenly saw the situation as ridiculous, herself in here hugging the wall simply because some silly young man was outside. There had to be a logical reason for his presence: perhaps she had dropped something on the road and he was trying to return it or he needed directions and had followed to ask. Perhaps he was just a masher—that was what her mother still called flirtatious and determined men.

She slid from her corner and tiptoed soundlessly across the living room, her confidence returning as soon as she left the kitchen. Quietly, she drew the extra bolt on the side door and pulled the curtains.

She was safe now from observation as long as she avoided the rear bedroom and the kitchen, because the house was set into a very steep hill; it fronted on the lake, and its long, screened-in, doorless porch was some twelve feet above the ground. She picked up a book and walked softly into her parents' bedroom; a small room always in shadow because of the huge hemlock just outside the window. She pushed pillows against the wall, patted them into shape and lay down on the bed to outwait the young man.

It was just two o'clock. She promised herself that she would remain there until four, when he would certainly have

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gone. But if her eyes stayed on the pages of her book her thoughts did not. The seconds dragged—she'd had no idea that minutes could seem so long.

She began to be furious with herself now because she had not answered the young man's knock the first time, instead of being drawn into this absurd pretence that the house was empty. Why had she not had the good sense to open the door, step outside and say, "Hullo—I was just leaving," and walk away?

By the time the hands of her watch nudged four, she stood up in relief. She had heard no sounds from outside for at least an hour. Now she could have her lunch, go swimming, or lie in the sun.

She turned to enter the living room—and stopped. Across the room was the side door with its drawn curtains. Through the curtains, worn thin from frequent washings, she saw the clearly outlined silhouette of the young man's head. He was still there, standing—simply standing—on the side steps.

At this moment she felt the first clutch of real fear.

With the arrival of fear—and its impact was stunning—all of her rationalisations collapsed. Suddenly she saw her position with a distinct and unpleasant clarity. There was no telephone in the cottage. The only house in sight, some five hundred yards away, was empty. On the west shore, nearly half a mile away, there was a small general store but other than this there was no-one nearby except Mrs. Elphinstone, whose cottage lay on the other side of the woods well out of sight. She was alone—chillingly and utterly alone—and this young man knew it.

He *did* know; she had realised this all the time, not daring to admit it because it was too alarming to consider. He had stood behind her on the station platform long enough to hear Tracy describe the loneliness of the cottage both in detail and at the top of her voice. Except for Tracy and Avis and Beth, now speeding towards New York, he and Mrs. Elphinstone were the only two people on earth who knew she was here alone for three days—and having refused Mrs. Elphinstone's invitation to dinner she was not likely to see her again today.

"I mustn't lose my head," she whispered, and backed into her parents' room to sit down with her head in her hands.

Her fingers had curled into fists, and the nails were cutting the palms of her hands... She spread them out and stared at them blankly. What kind of man was it out there, a young

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man who followed a girl home because he knew she would be alone for several days? But she knew she mustn't follow that thought to any kind of conclusion.

She had two choices: she could let herself imagine just what might be wrong with the young man, until she turned into a gibbering idiot, or she could use her head and fight.

Her only weapon was silence, she realised—with silence she could outwait and outwit him. Eventually he would get tired of waiting and go away, and then she could run out of the back door to Mrs. Elphinstone's.

The important thing was to keep an eye on him so that she would know when he went away. Right now he was on the side steps. She walked to the door and looked. Thank God, he was gone. But she quickly decided that it was safer knowing exactly where he was.

She was hungry and terribly thirsty. The first thing was to get a drink of water. She tiptoed to the door into the kitchen and found its window empty. Dropping to her hands and knees she crawled to the rear door and listened. She could hear no sounds.

She realised almost at once that she couldn't risk a drink from the kitchen sink. The taps were directly under the window and she would have to stand to reach them. Instead she would have to crawl into the bathroom beyond. Heartened by the silence, she crept into the bathroom, remembering to leave the door open no wider than she had found it. Kneeling beside the sink she turned on the tap, a cup ready in her other hand.

A few drops of water appeared, then dribbled into the sink.

She turned the tap again, farther. Nothing happened, and she sat back and stared at it stupidly. She recalled that the stopcock was outside, just under the kitchen window. Every autumn her father went out and turned it off before he drained the water pipes. Now it had been turned off again!

Sitting back on her heels and staring at the pipes, her world narrowed until it contained only an oppressive thirst and a waterless tap, and she whispered reproachfully, "Why did you do this? Why did you do this when you can see nobody is here? Don't you *know* I'm not here?"

He wants me to come outside, she thought, except that how could she go outside if she wasn't here? Her mind felt blurred and stupid. She turned and crawled out of the bathroom, not pausing until she reached the sanctuary of the far wall. There she stopped to stare at the shelves of canned

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goods just out of reach. Soups. Grapefruit juice. Orange juice. Her throat ached and she crept to the shelf and snatched down the tall tin of orange juice.

Then, with a cunning she had not known she possessed, she remembered how the man had stared through the window for nearly ten minutes, as if to memorise exactly what he saw. She put the tall tin back where she had found it and groped behind it for the small can of pineapple juice he could not have noticed.

She was only just back against the wall when she heard him again. He passed the window and, in her one quick glimpse of him, she saw that he was eating a sandwich. He must have visited the general store to buy food and she hadn't even known he had gone. Wearily she grasped her can of juice and crawled back into the bedroom on her hands and knees.

Darkness came slowly. And when the dinner hour had long since passed, she gave up all hope of Mrs. Elphinstone's returning to repeat her invitation.

From time to time she could hear the young man prowling around the house. Once she heard a bottle strike the hemlock with force and shatter, as if he'd aimed and thrown it. How boyish, she thought, as she crouched on the floor, hating him.

Then all at once it was dark, utterly and opaquely black, as only these country nights could be; and with the coming of night she knew how small her courage was going to be.

She could summon back neither indignation nor logic. There was only a lethargy of mind and body, and it seemed that there had never been a time when she had not hidden here alone. She felt bereft and frightened, like a small child lost in a black and terrifying void. Over and over she repeated to herself, "There can't be any harm in him, there *has* to be a reason for his staying here, I'm imagining too much, I've always had too lively an imagination . . ."

She desperately needed food to fortify her nerves. She'd had nothing to eat since breakfast at eight o'clock and there was a joint in the refrigerator. She thought that if she could just reach the refrigerator and open the door—but no, there was a hitch there somewhere. *Think*, she told herself, and mentally, step by step, she crawled to the refrigerator and opened the door. Of course—the light inside the box.

She felt a cold sweat break out across her neck as she pictured herself opening that door and light spilling out to illuminate the room. Then I'll take out the fuses, she thought, remembering the fuse box hung on the wall of her bedroom.

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Soundlessly she crept across the living room into the back bedroom, rose to her feet and felt along the wall. The door of the fuse box squeaked a little as she pulled it open and for a moment, in spite of the darkness, she panicked. With trembling fingers she counted the fuses because she couldn't allow herself a mistake. There were four. She checked and rechecked, and then carefully unscrewed them and placed them on the bureau.

The last fuse clicked into something metallic as she put it down. Her cautious fingers found a couple of coins and, with relief that she hadn't knocked them clattering to the floor, she shoved the coins into the pocket of her shorts.

On hands and knees she crept back through the living room and paused to listen at the door of the kitchen. She heard nothing, but suddenly, silently, a brilliant beam of light bisected the blackness and came to rest on the kitchen floor. The light came from the window, where it seemed pasted on the darkness like a moon. Slowly it moved across the floor to examine the shelf of canned goods and then it swerved abruptly towards the bathroom.

She huddled behind the door to the kitchen and covered her eyes to shut out the searching, indecent light. Her terror was so acute that she believed she was going to be sick . . . in only one more second she would have been captured by that light. She crouched there and wept softly to herself.

After a long time, weak and trembling, she crawled into her parents' bedroom and lay down on the bed. The night was full of noises—small, stealthy animal sounds and sharp creaks of contracting wood. Each sound was different and each one produced a whimper deep inside her. It was cold and she reached for the eiderdown at the foot of the bed and pulled it over her, knowing she mustn't close her eyes but aching to be warm again.

Suddenly, aware that she had fallen asleep, she opened her eyes and her heart thudded sickeningly as she struggled to her elbows. Something had awakened her. Was he . . . was he in the house?

Movement drew her eyes to the window and she sucked in her breath sharply because she had felt so safe in this room—but she had forgotten the tree outside. He had climbed the hemlock in the dark until he was on a level with the window and could look across and inside. She could see the silhouette of his head jutting out from the trunk. For a long second she

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stared, mesmerised, and then, still wound in the eiderdown, she rolled to the edge of the bed and dropped lightly to the floor, just as his flashlight came to life and began its deadly probing of the room.

The shape of her terror had changed now; it was a weight so heavy that it crushed out reason. She thought dully, He knows I'm in here, he's known it all the time, he wants to do this to me.

There was almost relief in admitting it. She put her hands to her eyes but there were no tears left. There was only revulsion at the intimacy between them now, the intimacy of this cat-and-mouse game played between them in the darkness.

And yet at the same time it was all in her imagination, she remembered, and she tried to summon back reason. All he had done was knock on her door. He thought the house was empty. Surely he would be as frightened as she was if he knew it was occupied, and certainly he would go away. He wanted to break in for food, or a place to sleep, and he was afraid to do it. He didn't know she was here. It was this feeling of being trapped in the dark that made her imagine such terrible things.

"I walked down the hill," she whispered, going over it again, "and he knocked on the door and I didn't answer and then—" But she couldn't remember any more.

She stopped trying and huddled there beside the bed for what seemed like for ever. When she heard the rasping noise at the kitchen door, she only nodded her head. She had been expecting it for so long that she was not surprised. He had some kind of tool and he was going to come in now.

She tried to anticipate how he would do it and how his steps would sound on the floor and how soon it would be before he found the fuse box. She wanted to make the suspense bearable so that there would be no new surprise moves. Her nerves screamed at the thought of surprise, and there was no escape because her mind had shrunk to the size of this room. It lay inert and beaten so that she yearned only for some small, enclosed, comforting space in which to hide.

She knew of such a space. There was a cupboard in the back bedroom, high in the wall beside the chimney. If she removed the blankets and climbed up there and pulled the door shut behind her—

He wouldn't find me right away, she thought proudly. Not right away. It would be dark and warm, just small enough for a curled-up body and there would be safety there.

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She got to her knees and crept through the living room into the back bedroom, the rasping sound louder now because she was very near him. As she stood up to pull open the cupboard door she heard him whistling softly through his teeth, and she thought in astonishment, He's *enjoying* himself.

The discovery shocked her. She thought, It isn't I who am losing my mind. It's he who's mad, he's really dangerous!

A tiny flame of anger ran through her and fed on a sense of outrage, and her tired brain, rousing under the stimulus of this brief anger, whispered, *look at you.* With infinite detachment her mind looked at herself as God might look down upon this house with light and pity, and she recoiled at what she saw: the nest of blankets in the other room, the turned-over, empty juice can, herself creeping from room to room on hands and knees. Like an animal, she thought in horror, and it was true—terror had done this. Hour by hour she had sloughed off successive layers of civilisation until she had become scarcely human in her fear.

Her hand dropped from the cupboard door and she straightened her shoulders and lifted her head. She could at least meet him like this, with dignity. There was no escape, no door or window from which she could run without his hearing her and finding her with his light. And surely there was no way to escape without using a door or a window?

Think, her mind cried again.

She crept out to the high, screened-in porch, to the place where for years there had been a hole in the screen no bigger than a finger. She found it and gently tugged. The rotted screen resisted only a little. She leaned against it, ripping until she felt blood run down her hands. She needed a sharp tool to finish. She waited until the young man began again on the door and—almost trance-like now—she entered the living room and brought back scissors and three cotton blankets. With the scissors she cut a hole in the screen large enough for her body. The blankets she tied together, pushing the last knot through the large hook that held one end of the porch hammock. She worked without hope, recognising hope as the most treacherous feeling of all as she lowered one blanket through the hole in the screen. He was still working at the door. She grasped the rope of blankets with both hands and pushed her bare legs through the screen. The torn edges ripped her flesh. The blankets held her for only that moment in which she was suspended twelve feet above the ground and then, as the knots slipped, catapulting her downwards, the

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kitchen door crashed open and the young man burst into the cottage.

Dazed and bruised she picked herself up from the ground and crawled into the water and began swimming . . .

The telephone booth stood next to the darkened general store like an upended coffin ablaze with light. For a moment she could not bear to expose herself to so much brightness. She felt in her dripping pocket for the money and forced herself to step inside and drop a coin into the slot.

A male voice said, "Police Barracks."

She whispered, "Please."

"I can't hear you," the voice said patiently.

She told him where she was and said, "I'll be waiting outside. If you'll just hurry."

"Is something wrong?" said the voice obtusely.

She began to cry. "Yes," she shouted at him, and hung up, and in a frenzy tore open the door of the booth and plunged into darkness again.

She waited a long time. There were no sirens and she began to think that nobody would come, that perhaps she was doomed for ever to darkness, when she looked up and saw the lights of a car. It stopped next to the telephone booth and a man climbed out, the twin beams of light shining on his black boots.

She stood up in the bushes and said, "Here I am." She took a step forwards and then she stopped. Now that she was on the perimeter of safety her own escape was suddenly not enough.

She said with a sob, "There's Mrs. Elphinstone—you must get to her, she's all alone on the north shore, and there's a man in a red plaid shirt—oh, please hurry before he finds her. *Please*."

The policeman reached her just as she fell.

She opened her eyes to find herself in a white hospital room with the starched white skirts of a nurse vanishing through the door.

A man in uniform was standing at the foot of the bed.

"It's Wednesday morning," he said. "You've been under sedation but the doctor said it's all right to ask you for a statement now—that is, if you feel up to it."

"Wednesday," she said in a puzzled voice, and turned her face to the morning light that streamed through the window. "Wednesday," she echoed, and suddenly it all came back to

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her and she covered her eyes with her hands to blot it out.

"Your family's on the way, they'll be here soon," the policeman said gently. "Are you sure you feel up to making a statement?"

She dropped her hands from her face and looked at him, knowing there was something she had to ask. "I'll be all right," she whispered. "It's just—is it over? Did you find him? Did I only imagine he was insane?"

"Suppose you tell me about it," he suggested.

She told him slowly, in a monotone, her voice faltering near the end. When she had finished (still without asking her question), he put away his notebook and said, "It always helps to tell someone, you know."

She nodded, nervously twisting the sheets between her fingers. "I have so little courage," she explained, and now the question bore down on her like a weight and yet she dared not speak it because she was afraid she had been too late.

"I wouldn't say that. You have a great deal of courage," he insisted. "We found him last night, and he was no ordinary young man."

"*Where* did you find him?" she asked desperately.

"At Mrs. Elphinstone's cottage. It was clever of you to think of that. How did you guess he would go there?"

She closed her eyes and said painfully, "Because he would have seen me talking to her earlier. Because in the darkness—all alone there—I came to know him better than I may ever know anyone again in my life." She opened her eyes and there were tears in them. "I can't remember his face, and I don't ever want to learn his name, and yet I know him—" She shivered—she could never explain to anyone the terrible bond that existed between a stalker and his prey.

"Mrs. Elphinstone," she said quietly, knowing the question could no longer be postponed. "Did he—is she—?"

"We reached her just in time," he said gravely. "We got to her cottage just after he had broken into it. That's what you have to remember now—that you saved Mrs. Elphinstone's life. It's no small accomplishment, when you think of the others."

"Others?" she said in a startled voice.

He nodded. "Yes . . . A housewife in Boston, a secretary in Brockton, an elderly woman in Cambridge. There were these others, quite a few of them. You were the first to get away from him alive."

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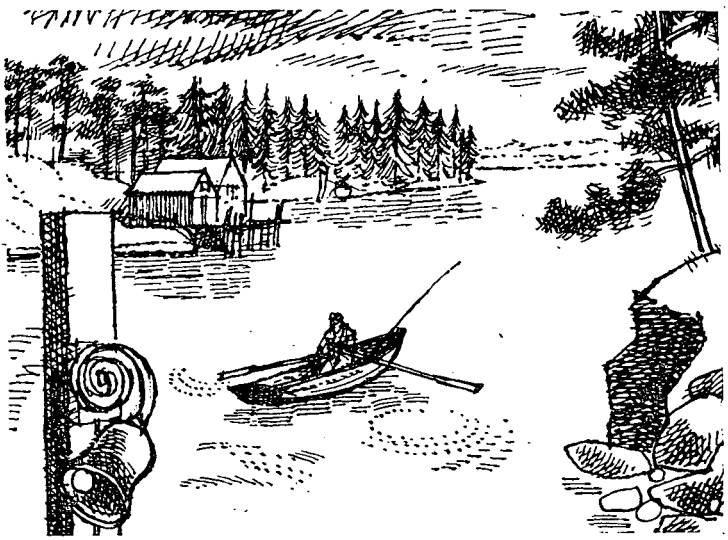
A remarkable true story —and you needn't be a fisherman to enjoy it

by ROBERT RUSSELL



PIKE FISHING BY BELL

EVERY river, pond, or stream challenges a fisherman. But despite the seductiveness of all water, each fisherman has his own special spot. For me, that place is a patch of water lying off the south-western shore of Hay Island, in the Admiralty group of the Thousand Islands, about two miles from the Canadian mainland.

I bought a cottage on Hay a few years ago. We are on a passage connecting the Canadian Middle with the Northern, or Bateau, Channel. The water isn't deep enough for the freighters or other big ships on the Seaway, six miles to the south, but

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we get a lot of traffic. Sailfish and schooners; outboards droning home with a load of groceries; cruisers from New York or Toronto, Florida or Nova Scotia, carrying children in orange life-preservers or women reclining with highballs; and an endless cavalcade of rowing boats, skiffs, and launches. The tour boats out of Clayton or Alexandria Bay pass five or six times a day on their way into Gananoque.

Sitting on our front porch in midsummer, you can watch the world go by—that is, if you can see. I can't. I have been blind since I was six years old.

But one day while I could still see, my brother Bud, who was twenty, took me with him for a morning's trout fishing on a stream near our home in southern New York state. When we reached the creek, he plucked and trimmed a small branch, tied a four-foot piece of line to one end, and, making a noose at the other, he slipped in a worm, drew the knot tight, and handed me the branch. "What do I do with this?" I asked.

"You fish," he said, and started along the bank. I shouldered my outfit and trudged behind him. After a few minutes I was imitating every movement of his, and although I didn't get any fish, I came home a fisherman for life.

A few months later, an accident cost me my sight, so I had to learn to fish without it. For years my only equipment was a package of eagle-claw hooks and an old bowed nine-foot bamboo fly rod. I learned early to string my rod, to bait my hook, to scale and clean fish. The only other things I needed were a stretch of water and a friend to fish with, and I had both. With one of these friends and his family, I took my rod for a week's fishing on the St. Lawrence. When I came home I resolved that some day I would spend my summers within the sound of those waves and with that big, soft, fresh wind blowing over me.

The years passed, and eventually I became a professor of literature at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. During my first summer there, my wife and I and our four children piled into the car and headed north. We found a place on Hay Island, borrowed the money to buy it, and settled in.

My old bamboo fly rod hangs there on the wall now, waiting for one of my own boys to take it down. I have moved on to a spinning outfit, a light glass rod, and a Mitchell Garcia 300 loaded with four-pound test monofilament. With a box of snap swivels and small lures, I am all set.

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I don't despise worms and live bait; they're just not available. The soil on my island is shallow. Thornbushes, pines, and wild raspberries do very well, but not worms. Occasionally a school of minnows and shiners passes along the shoal out in front of the cottage, and sometimes we pick up a few with a little umbrella net. But not very often. If we want bait, we have to go into Gananoque, and islanders don't like going to town.

So I stick my box of lures in my pocket, take my rod, and go down to the shoal which drops off sheer into sixteen feet of water. My predecessors looked upon this spot as a convenient dumping ground for old bedsprings and discarded stoves, so I have lost more than my share of lures. Often, when I would hook a good one, he would dive down into this jungle, twist the line around a piece of jagged iron, give a couple of yanks, and swim off about his business.

Of course, we tried family fishing excursions. Elisabeth and I snapped our four children into lifejackets and put them into our sixteen-foot outboard. Before starting the motor, I delivered my stern lecture on sitting still. Then, after several pulls, the old Johnson coughed, spluttered, and finally consented. With three-month-old Miranda on her lap, Elisabeth slid into the stern, and I moved to the middle seat. Before we had cleared the dock, Richie, six, started flailing an old casting rod. The tip buzzed past my ear, and I cried, "Richie! What are you doing?"

"Fishing!" he shouted.

"Give me that rod!"

"Bob!" called Elisabeth. "Make Mark sit down. He's leaning over the side at the bow."

With the casting rod in my hand I worked my way forward, kicking over the bought worms to where Mark, four, was hanging over the side, trailing his hand in the water. I yanked him back with my free hand, then put down the rod and smacked him. Over the sound of the motor and his howls, I launched again into my lecture about sitting still.

These short trips were not at all the sort of thing that comes to mind when one thinks of a quiet afternoon on the river.

I had to figure out some way of getting out on the river alone.

The answer came from an unexpected quarter and on a very unlikely occasion—graduation day at the college.

The faculty was lining up in the hall of the liberal arts building in full academic regalia for the procession down to the

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football field to swelter through another of those grim ceremonies. Durrell Enck, the chairman of the physics department, whom I knew only slightly, came up and said, "Hi, Bob. How about being my partner in the procession? English and physics make a good combination."

"Thanks, Durrell," I answered. As we entered the field and made our way towards the seats of honour, I said, "I hope you don't have to stay in Lancaster all summer. If you do, you'll be done to a crisp by fall."

"Yes, I'm going to be here. I'm teaching summer school. What about you?"

"Not me. I'd rather starve on my island in the St. Lawrence." We reached our seats and sat down.

"You lucky dog!" he murmured. "I bet it's nice up there. Any fishing?"

"Pike and bass. Mostly pike, northerns."

"Get any big ones?"

"Sure. Why don't you come up after summer school and try your luck? Then I can show you my problem."

"What's your problem?"

"Well, somehow I've got to get out on the river by myself. I need a way of keeping in touch with my own mooring dock—a radio transmitter or something like that."

He was silent for a couple of minutes while the commencement speaker droned on.

"Have you got electricity?"

"Yes."

"Well, what about a bell?"

"That's the idea, but I can't have a bell ringing solidly while I'm out fishing. I would be going out around five in the morning, and I have a neighbour nearby."

"Suppose it rang just once in a while—maybe every twenty seconds?"

"That would really do the trick. Do you think you could work out something?"

"Tell you what. Why don't you come over to the lab late this afternoon, and we'll see what we can rig up."

At four-thirty, I found Durrell in the lab working with a small electric motor the size of a fat pocket watch. It was enclosed except for one shaft, which it turned at the rate of one revolution a minute. To this shaft he had attached an ordinary radio knob, but instead of leaving it circular, he had cut the sides into a square. He was mounting the motor with its revolving square knob in a little wooden box.

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"What I'm going to do," he said, "is to put a set of flexible metal contacts right beside the motor so that each point of the square knob will press the contacts together for a second. They'll spring back, breaking the circuit when the point passes. When the contacts are touching, they will let the current go through to this big old bell, and it will ring."

"Will it work?" he asked.

"It will before I'm through with it," he said; and it did.

The next day I took Durrell's invention up to Hay Island. I mounted the bell on a post at the end of the dock, ran two hundred feet of lamp cord up to the cottage, where I had installed his box according to instructions, hooked it up, pushed in the plug, and started for the dock. Halfway there, I heard the chime of the bell.

I found the first mooring ring, cast off the stern line, and stepped into the twelve-foot dinghy. Pulling the boat along the dock with my hands, I came to the ring where the bowline was tied. I cast it off, sat down on the middle thwart, and pushed free of the dock. I glided out to the *ding-ding* of the bell. Bare feet thudded along the dock, and Richie's voice called, "Hey, Dad, where are you going?"

"Oh, just out for a little row." I pulled gently on the oars, and the boat slid out towards the channel.

"Can you go out by yourself, Dad?"

"Sure."

"Will you take me for a little ride?"

"Yes! Hang on." I backwatered till the stern bumped gently against the dock. He climbed in. We had our ride, and I docked again easily.

The gate out on to the river had swung open for me.

The next morning I slipped out of bed at five, dressed quietly, crept downstairs, took my box of lures and spinning outfit, and started for the river. I was in the boat before I remembered I hadn't plugged in the cord. This done, I picked up the oars and pushed off over the still water, away from the sleep-filled house. Every fifteen seconds, as each corner of that square knob closed the contacts, the bell spoke, telling me all I needed to know. I pulled strongly for the southern tip of the island.

The catbirds, yellow warblers, song sparrows, and white-throats were waking, and as they tuned up, they sang that the shore was about fifty yards to my right. I rowed softly on through the silent water, along the line of their singing, keeping the sound of my bell astern and slightly to the right. The

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gulls began to cry and complain over the river. Far behind me and to the left from somewhere out on the Forty Acre Shoals came the fluting of a loon. Perhaps a mile to my left, an outboard started up and whined off towards Gananoque. Minutes later its wash passed and slapped up on the rocks, confirming my position. The sun had risen high enough to send a warm beam to my right cheek, and a light south-westerly breeze sprang up at my back.

The bell, which had unchained me from my dock, was now far astern, and its quiet *ding-ding* had almost blended into the other morning sounds. I pulled hard on my right oar, sending the bow farther out into the channel. I coasted for a moment, enjoying my freedom and the morning. Then I released the anchor line, and the little pulley squeaked and rumbled as twenty feet ran over it. I let out ten feet of slack, secured it, and lit my pipe.

I snapped an eighth-ounce Abu on to my swivel and started casting. With each toss I let the lure sink to the bottom and then brought it back in short two- or three-foot runs. On the third last I got my strike, a firm, solid tug. I set the hook, and the reel buzzed. I hadn't even moved him. Slowly I cranked the reel, and the weight at the other end came gradually up and in. Then the rod suddenly bent and the reel screamed as the fish, realising that he had been hooked, dived for the bottom. A pike, and a big one, too! When he stopped his dive, I started gently pumping the rod. With a big pike on four-pound test, I couldn't afford to take chances, and I wanted this one.

He gave ground slowly, but when he was up four or five feet he plunged again. The rod doubled, and the reel buzzed. This time he wasn't going to move. For three minutes he lay there, stubbornly resisting. Then suddenly he rushed towards the surface. I cranked furiously to keep up with him. The line came taut again with that same loggy heaviness. I led him gradually towards the boat. When he was about five feet from the tip of my rod he caught sight of me, and with a great wallow and thrash he set my reel shrieking as he sounded again. I let him go and when he had finished, began urging him up gently. I couldn't rush him, not only because of my light line, but also because I wanted him really played out for landing.

You can't net a fish you can't see. Landing a perch, a bass, or even an eel is easy. I play them out, pass the butt of the rod along till I come to the tip, then feel down the line until

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I reach the fish, grab him by the gills, and pick him up. But pike have teeth, big ones, like needles. Their mouths are large enough to take a man's hand comfortably. I had hooked a big one, so I wanted him tired out by the time I began reaching around his gills.

Gradually he came up, then dived again. He repeated this four times. Finally he was through fighting and seemed to lie near the surface, daring me to finish the job. By raising the end of my rod, I could tell he had only three or four feet of line. It was time.

Easily, so as not to upset him, I passed the butt of the rod to the stern till I reached the tip. Holding the hair-thin monofilament between the thumb and index finger of my right hand, I worked my left hand down about twelve inches. He would explode if I touched him, so I moved the line from side to side, trying to judge how far away he was. He drifted towards me. I thought I had about another foot. I released my right hand and pinched the line just above my left, then moved my left down another six inches. He was close now. I was leaning far over the gunwale. I moved my right hand down to my left, pinched the thread again, and let go with my left.

Moving the line back and forth and raising it a couple of inches, I knew he was very near. There was no give to the line, and the arc in which I had to move it was very sharp. I would have to make my grab now, before he started thrashing. But which way was he lying? With his tail towards the bow or the stern? I had to gamble.

I moved my left hand down the gunwale about eighteen inches towards the stern, reached out as far as I dared, and, fingers spread, I plunged my hand into the water as deep as I could and scooped back to the boat. He was beneath the boat. My fingers slipped along the underside of his lower jaw. I had missed, but so had he.

Instantly, I pulled in about a foot of line with my right hand and made another grab. My fingers closed on his throat just behind his gills. I pressed him against the side of the boat and slipped my fingers into the gill slits. When I had a firm grip, I hoisted him out and into the boat, which righted itself.

When he hit the boards, he spat the lure and began to thrash. I held him with my left hand while I reached under my seat to get the sawed-off stub of an oar. Holding his head slightly off the bottom, I gave him three solid whacks on the forehead. His great body quivered and was still.

I made sure he was through before I began hunting around

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in my pockets for my Braille tape measure. Thirty-two inches he was, and by the feel of him he would go about eight pounds —eight and a half, as it turned out.

I dropped him back on to the floorboards and straightened up. It took me four matches to get my pipe going again. Then I sat there, calming down and slowly rejoining the rest of the world.

Far behind me, I heard the day's first tour boat. It was coming right down the channel. Its engines would drown out the sound of my bell, so I would have to wait until it had passed before starting for home. The tour boat swung out to my left to avoid swamping me with its wash.

When it drew abreast, I reached down, picked up my pike, and held it over my head. The thunder of the engines died to a murmur, and the big doubledecker sidled over to within ten yards of me. Triumphant, I held up my prize for as long as I thought they might be interested, then laid it down.

"Hey," called a voice far above me. "Hold him up again, will you? I didn't get my picture."

I held him up.

"Thanks," he shouted.

The bow of the big boat swung away towards town. The murmur of its engines mounted to a purr, a growl, and then a roar, taking the crowd of tourists on their way. They rushed on into their dazzling day of golden sunshine on blue and silver water among the green islands, leaving the river and the morning to me. In the distance astern came the soft, regular *ding-ding* of my bell. As I rowed back along that thin, clear thread of sound, I had the wetness of the great St. Lawrence on my palms, its sounds in my ears, its smells in my nostrils, its joy on my tongue, and, at my feet, an ingot from its inexhaustible treasure-house.

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REARRANGEMENTS

Change one letter in MONOCLE, rearrange the letters and make a word meaning wise management.

Change one letter in ASHEN, rearrange the letters and make an animal.

Change one letter in ELDEST, rearrange the letters and make an instrument.

For baffled readers the answers are on page 167.

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From one of the most exciting of the new novels, Argosy chooses an extract of gripping conflict—complete in itself

JON CLEARY

THE FALL OF AN EAGLE

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The background: Turkey today. The characters: Virginia Halstead, a young Australian widow and archaeologist, and Yashar Dursun, an enigmatic Kurd. They met casually. He was fascinated; she, unaware. Now he has driven her to remote primitive country.

THE wall, as she had expected, was much too recent to be connected with the Hittites. Its stones ran up from a grove of poplar trees to peter away in a field of burnt stubble; one could only guess at the dust of how many harvests had blown over them: stones of the past lay dotted all over Turkey like pebbles left by time's tide. She walked down to the poplar grove where Dursun sat with his back against a tree.

"You got me out here under false pretences."

He shook his head, smiling up at her. "I am no expert. I just knew this wall was old, that was all. A few centuries do not mean as much to me as they do to you."

She took off her hat and sunglasses and sat down opposite him, her back against another tree. She shook out her hair, feeling it wet with perspiration against the nape of her neck. The day lay becalmed around them; the trees stood like tall green-sailed masts waiting for a breath of breeze. Through the pale shafts of the trunks, fifty yards away, she could see the silver glitter of the river, the only movement in the whole dead landscape. She took the cheese roll and the bottle of wine he handed her. Turk-like he had not waited for her, but had already begun to eat and had drunk from the bottle. She wiped the mouth of the bottle and raised it to her lips.

"Your hair loose like that, a wine bottle at your mouth—you look reckless."

She took the bottle quickly from her mouth and a trickle of wine ran down her chin. "Don't get any ideas, Mr. Dursun. I assure you I am anything but reckless."

"Mr. Dursun. Are Australians always so formal? From what little I've read about them, I thought they slapped even strangers on the back and called them by their first names. Can't you call me, Yashar? And I like your name: Virginia. That comes from virgin, doesn't it?"

"I think so. But names don't mean much." She began to chew on the bread and cheese.

"I'm glad. I've never been very interested in virgins."

She didn't look at him at that, giving him no encouragement. She finished the bread and cheese, had another mouthful of wine, put down the bottle and leaned back on one elbow to look up through the trees. The leaves were a black blur

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against the bright faded blue of the sky; she wondered when they had last moved to the slap of a strong wind. Then she saw something move in the sky, a small dark shape that floated across an open patch between the tops of the trees. At first she thought it was a leaf, letting go of the tree with the reluctance of a living thing that knew it was going to die; then it was joined by other shapes, and now she saw they were birds high in the sky. They hung there, dozens of them, waiting like dark angels for the end of this part of the world.

She pointed upwards. "Those birds—what are they?"

He rolled on his back beside her; they lay on the brittle grass as on a bed and looked up at the ceiling of the sky. "Eagles. They are waiting for the storks."

"The *what*?"

"The storks. They come south every year towards the end of summer, from Russia, Poland, Rumania. I have seen them in other parts of Turkey—this must be one of their migration lanes. And the eagles wait for them, just like the brigands used to wait for the travellers on the old roads through Turkey years ago."

"And kill them?"

"What else?" Again the shrug. "It's nature. You wait and see. The eagles do not have an easy fight of it."

Repelled but fascinated, she got up and walked through the trees to the eastern side of the grove. The sun had swung over so that she still stood in shade but the sky above was open to her. There was now no mistaking the eagles for dead leaves; they cruised lazily but menacingly on the limitless plains of the burning sky. Even more now than ever, Virginia was aware of the deathly stillness; fifty yards away she heard the river rippling over its stones, tearing itself into silver scarves against projecting rocks. She looked around at the surrounding fields and hills, waiting like the eagles, then she looked up again at the sky. The huge birds had begun to draw together in a tight circle.

Dursun came up behind her, put one hand on her hip and pointed to the north with his other hand. "There they come!"

She looked beyond the hills, saw through the shimmering haze the distant snow-streaked landmark that was Erjiyes Dagh. It rose out of the hills around it like a frozen explosion, the haze seeming to make it still be trembling from its ages-old eruption; the snow on it looked incredible in this heat, one thought of it as the bones of the mountain laid bare to the bleaching sun. A wisp of cloud hung round the mountain's

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peak; from it another cloud was drifting towards her.

She put on her dark glasses and stood watching as the cloud —getting whiter as it got closer, constantly changing shape but never changing direction—came down the trail of sky across the shining plain where the eagles waited. There was an inevitability, a frightening resignation, about the line of flight of the storks. They had been coming this way for centuries; this ambush always lay in wait for them; some of them would never reach the south. In myths, Virginia thought, storks are the carriers of life. But the birds themselves knew that death was a part of life.

Dursun took his hand from her hip and lay down. He had taken off his jacket, making a pillow of it on a small hummock of dry grass. He rested his head on it, nodding for her to do the same. "The fight will go on for hours. This is the most comfortable way to watch it."

She hesitated, then sat down but did not lie down beside him. He had brought the bottle of wine with him; he offered it to her, but she shook her head. He took a mouthful of wine, then lay back again, almost bored by what was about to happen above him. She looked at him, feeling a little disgusted at his indifference; then she sat back against a tree, straining her neck to stare upwards. She knew she would hate what she was about to see, but she could not shut her eyes against it.

The eagles had begun to quicken their flight, rising and falling on the waves of heat-disturbed air. The white cloud was now quite distinctly a flight of storks: she guessed at their number, perhaps two hundred of them. They outnumbered the eagles three to one, but she had never thought of storks as fighting birds. To her the scene presented an Australian analogy: a flock of sheep running into an ambush of dingoes.

Suddenly she rebelled at the thought of the massacre to come. "Stop them!"

He rolled his head to look up and back at her. "How? Even if I had a gun, they are too high to shoot. Nothing can stop it, Virginia. This has nothing to do with us down here. It has been going on for centuries. I doubt even if a man in an aeroplane could stop it. It is in their blood, the storks' as well as the eagles'. Don't things like this happen in Australia?"

"I don't know. I'm a city girl. Maybe."

"City people are too protected. Every one of them is full of blood, but they all faint at the sight of it."

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"Doesn't *anything* upset you?" she said tartly.

"Yes," he said quietly. "Poverty."

She looked back up at the sky, left without an answer: she was no more accustomed to the sight of poverty than she was to the sight of blood. The storks came on, now bunched more tightly together, a white phalanx flying with slow grace to what Virginia thought was certain death. The eagles had begun to climb higher, still circling, their movements a little more jerky, as if nervous and impatient for the coming slaughter. The strain of looking up began to tell on Virginia's neck, and she lay back. Dursun moved his head aside on his improvised pillow, and after a moment's hesitation she laid her head beside his. She could feel the closeness of him, the sound of his breathing and the heat of his body, but she was not disturbed by it: what was about to happen in the sky took all her attention.

The dark circle of eagles had lifted, standing still in the air now, poised for the plunging kill. The storks were flying so close together that it was impossible to see between them; they were airborne on the one huge shining wing. Virginia, staring up at them through her dark glasses, lost all consciousness of the earth on which she lay. It was as if she, too, were floating in the air, above the sun-glazed hills, a spectator and yet also a part of the death that was about to happen. She prayed for the storks as she might have prayed for children about to be massacred.

Then the storks were immediately beneath the eagles. There was an instant when both flights of birds seemed to stand frozen in the still air; then the eagles plunged like dark arrowheads at the white body of the storks. And suddenly, as if on command, the storks split up; not in confusion, but as if instinct, inherited over centuries, had trained them for this particular combat. They flapped heavily through the air, twisting and turning in slow ungainly flight, but somehow managing to avoid the first savage attack of the eagles.

No storks had fallen in the first assault, and now the eagles were climbing, coming in again. But the storks turned to meet them; and Virginia, seeing what they were doing, gasped at what looked like suicide. She had read of this suicide impulse in wild creatures: the lemmings of Norway were the classic example. Self-destruction, to her, was the worst of deaths; even in her blackest moments after the death of Tom she had not once thought of taking her own life. She shivered, and Dursun reached for her hand and pressed it. "Just watch."

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But it was impossible to watch the whole battle. The sky above her seemed full of birds, dark and white, whirling in a storm of wings and screams; despite her horror and disgust, she felt a strange mounting excitement take hold of her. Spittle thickened in her mouth, and she reached for the bottle and took a mouthful of wine. She could see feathers beginning to float in the air, like tiny puffs of smoke; birds locked together rode the sky as the one piebald beast. Then she saw that the storks were not accepting their fate; they were fighting with the same savagery as their attackers.

She gasped aloud with delight and surprise: she had always thought of storks as passive, peaceful birds. But now she saw that they were not resigned to death, that the urge to survive was as strong in them as in any living creature. Her hand tightened on Dursun's as she saw the battle was not going to be as one-sided as she had expected.

The air immediately above them was a turmoil of birds, plunging, weaving, twisting, falling, screaming: an intensely local storm in the vast glittering sky. A stork stumbled away from the *mêlée*, an eagle clinging to its long neck; another stork dived, its huge beak aimed like a javelin, and the eagle fell away. It came slowly down, its great wings flapping despairingly, then it died while still in the air and dropped like a boulder to the earth some three or four hundred yards from the poplar grove.

A stork followed it, ridden down by an eagle. The white wings beat the air all the way, but it was a hopeless struggle: the eagle had made its kill. Virginia turned away as she saw the two birds hit the ground in a field on the other side of the river: she could not bear the final cruelty.

Dursun sat up, then stood up, looking down at her with concern. "Let's go back into the trees. You don't want to watch this."

Wordlessly she stood up, feeling a little dizzy with the effects of the wine she had drunk and the battle she had seen. She followed him back to where she had left her camera and bag, her hand in his, led by him as if she were a child being led away from some terrible accident. She did not look up, but she could hear the battle going on above her, the birds screaming in exultation and fear, killing and dying. She sat down against a tree and Dursun sat beside her.

"You must not let it upset you." He held her hand in both of his, and she did not draw it away. "This is nature. It has been happening for ever, even long before that wall was

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built—" He nodded out into the glare at the long ridge of stones lying like the exposed backbone of some long-buried monster. "Just don't look up. The fight may go on for another hour. But they'll drift away. It is a running fight that could go on for miles, all up and down the valley."

There was one terrifying scream that rent the air: like that of a soul plunging into hell, Virginia thought; and she clutched Dursun's hand, digging her nails into him. "Why can't something be done, Yashar?" It was the first time she had called him by his first name, but no reaction showed on his face. "If it happens every year, why can't something be done to protect the storks?"

"What? Kill all the eagles in Turkey? Wouldn't that be wrong, too? The eagle is the most magnificent bird there is, the king of birds. Would you kill all the lions and tigers of the world? Destroy so much beauty?"

She was surprised to hear him talk of beauty; but then perhaps he thought only of beauty in terms of strength: she wondered if he would see beauty in a rose. "Why does there have to be so much killing, so much cruelty?"

"You are being stupid, Virginia," he said matter-of-factly. She waited for resentment to rise in her, but there was none; after a moment she nodded in agreement. "Men are just as cruel as those eagles. What about your heroes of the past? Look at the Greeks. They killed their prisoners to save themselves the trouble of feeding them or having to take them with them. And the Ottomans, they made those eagles up there look like pet lovebirds. They had one small, very entertaining custom—all the younger brothers of a Sultan were put to death so that he had no heirs but those he produced himself. Brotherly love, eh? And the Nazis—"

"Don't go on." The sound of the battle had drifted away; she glanced up through the trees and saw the sky was clear.

"Cruelty is a part of life, Virginia," he said, still holding her hand. "You accept it when you live the sort of life some of us have to live."

She looked at him, hoping for some revelation; for all the strong physical presence of him, he was surrounded by a fog that baffled and frustrated her. "Who *are* you, Yashar?"

He smiled at her, taking his hand from hers and putting his arm round her shoulders. A part of her rebelled against the intimacy, but the rebellion was not strong enough; she stirred a little, but allowed his arm to remain where it was. "Does it matter? I don't know who *you* are."

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"I haven't hidden anything."

"You must have some secrets." She admitted that to herself, but said nothing. "But I haven't asked about them, have I? I don't want to know."

She stiffened in his arm, but he didn't let her go; she could feel his grip on her strengthen, even though gently. "You mean you are just looking for a quick affair? I'm not like that, that's one secret you had better get to know about me now!"

His hand came up to turn her face towards his; she felt the calloused palm, not the palm of a hotel owner, against her cheek. "Virginia, I have tried to stay away from you. No, believe me, please—" as she tried to strain her cheek out of the rough bowl of his hand. "I watched you for two days before I spoke to you in the cave of the churches. I told myself that nothing could come of it, even if you allowed it. But I couldn't help myself—I *had* to speak to you, to get to know you—"

"You didn't go about it in the friendliest way."

He nodded, the dark eyes that could be so fierce in their anger now tender, almost humble. "I am not used to approaching women cap in hand." She wondered where he got his English colloquial phrases, but she said nothing; all at once, for this moment and this day, she did not want the fog surrounding him to be cleared. Perversely, the mystery of him suddenly had its own appeal. "The point is, I wanted to meet you."

"I didn't want to meet *you*."

"Did you want to meet any man?" he said with a quick flash of insight . . . "Perhaps I am jealous. Yes, I *am* jealous!" He spoke with sudden fierceness, pulling her face round towards his so that their noses brushed.

She stared at him, afraid, yet too far gone to draw back. A movement far out in the fields caught her eye, but it was not enough: it was as if a lasso of thread was being thrown to her to prevent her stepping over a precipice. She saw the stork hit the ground like a white meteor, then the eagle was on it, tearing into it.

It seemed a long time later that they lay beside each other, he on his back and she with her head resting on the pillow of his arm. Far away they could hear the birds still screaming as they fought; idly she wondered how they could stay in the air so long. She rolled on her back and looked up at the

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trees above them. "These poplar groves are always so neatly planted. Why is that?"

"Do you notice the different heights of the trees? A tree is planted every time a baby is born. The grove grows as the family grows."

"What a lovely idea!" She turned her head, amused, not frightened by the prospect of her question: "Would you plant a tree if I had a baby, Yashar?"

She noticed the hesitation before he replied. "Not in Turkey."

"Where, then?"

"Brazil, perhaps." He smiled, but she recognised it as an attempt to throw her off any further questions.

The smile went. He took his arm from beneath her, stood up and began to dress. "My future isn't here."

"You sound sad when you say that."

He shrugged, as if sadness was another of the things he was accustomed to. "I wish I could take you to my home."

"Why don't you, then?"

"You had better get dressed," he said, and turned away.

Once more she felt the abrasive effect of his sudden changes of mood. Then he smiled again, took her arm and led her out of the poplar grove. "No regrets?"

"I'm not a schoolgirl, Yashar," she said, but she knew she was only evading his question . . .

The battle of the birds had ended. She looked up as they came out into the open glare and saw the white cloud of storks, now greatly diminished, heading south. They flew close together, a little sluggishly, wearied by the long flight; the leaders, she guessed, were already looking for a place to settle and spend the night. She looked around for the eagles, but they had split up, were now individual specks in the blue glass of the sky. They planed aimlessly in the upper storeys of the air, as if bewildered and lost now that the fight was over; then they began to move away towards the hills, the remnants of an ambush that had been defeated. And suddenly she felt a surge of admiration, almost of awe, for the storks. Birds of peace, they had fought the birds of prey, had had their casualties but had not lost the battle. The survivors, and there were many more of them than those that had died, had won through to the south and another year of living.

Dursun drove the car up the narrow track beside the old wall and turned on to the road. In the cool screen of the poplar grove they had been protected from the worst of the

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afternoon's heat; now it struck at them again with all the fierceness of the ambushing eagles. "Do people ever die from this heat?"

"Sometimes. And from the cold. And hunger and sickness and childbirth. And sometimes just from despair. People die, Virginia. One cause is as good or bad as another."

"You're too fatalistic for me. You'll have to change."

"It may be difficult. But for you, I'll try."

Ahead of them two eagles tore at a white mound of feathers in the middle of the road. Dursun blew the horn loudly, but the eagles were too intent on devouring their kill; the car went by only a foot from them, and Virginia looked out and saw the horrifying mess of blood, feathers, claws and savagely ripping beaks. She shut her eyes, feeling the sickness rise in her throat, and kept them closed till they had driven another mile or so. Then she opened them and leaned back in the seat, breathing heavily.

"You should not have looked," Dursun said. "You did the right thing to keep your eyes closed after we passed those first birds. We have passed eight or nine others, in the fields and on the roads. I can see now you will never be used to things like this."

"Would you want me to be?" She thought she detected a note of criticism in his voice.

But she had been wrong. He took a hand from the wheel and pressed her arm. "Virginia, I should not want you to be any different from what you are. A man should never try to change what he loves."

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ACCIDENTALS

The ingenuity of drivers involved in accidents in seeking to assert their innocence, or at least excuse their errors, is apparently inexhaustible, to judge from this genuine selection of excerpts from insurance claims:—

- I knocked over a man. He admitted it was his fault as he had been run over before.
- Car had to turn sharper than was necessary owing to an invisible lorry.
- The other man altered his mind, so I had to run over him.
- A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.
- Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I haven't got.
- The other car collided with mine without giving any warning of its intentions.

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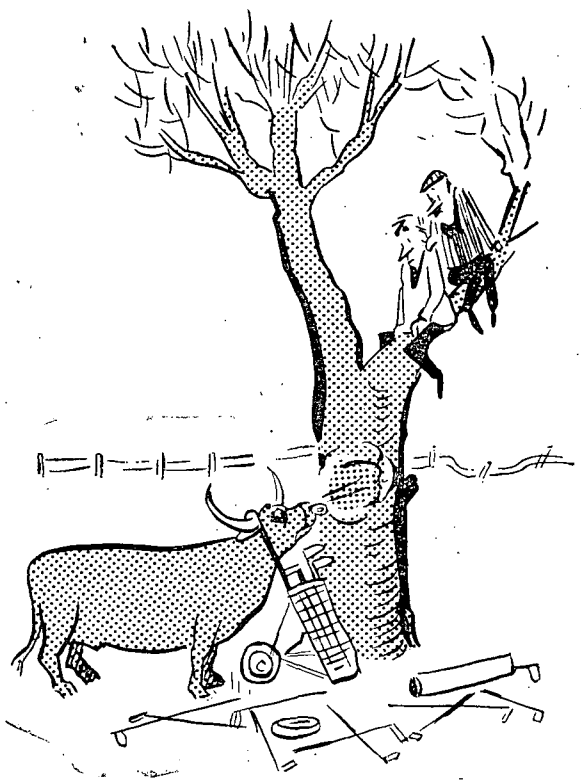
GOLF WITH GRAHAM

You can't tell a wood from an iron? No matter : you don't have to be in Arnold Palmer's class to get a kick and a laugh out of these cartoons from the sharp-pointed, irreverent pen of Alex Graham. See for a start how he sheds new light on those mysterious phrases which so often punctuate golfers' conversation . . .



TWO UP

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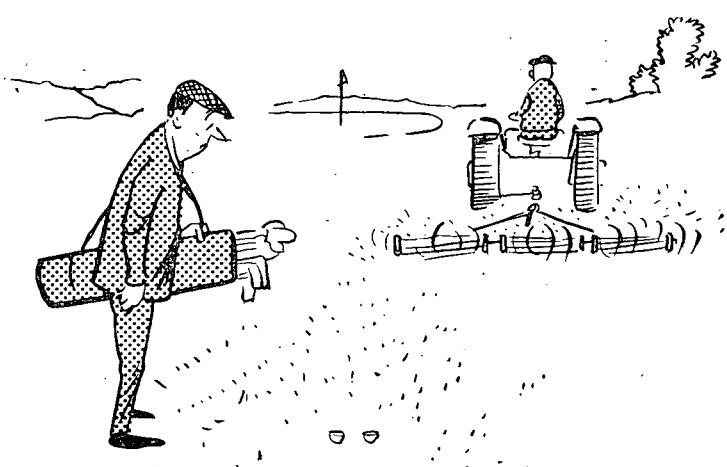
FOUR DOWN



HALVED

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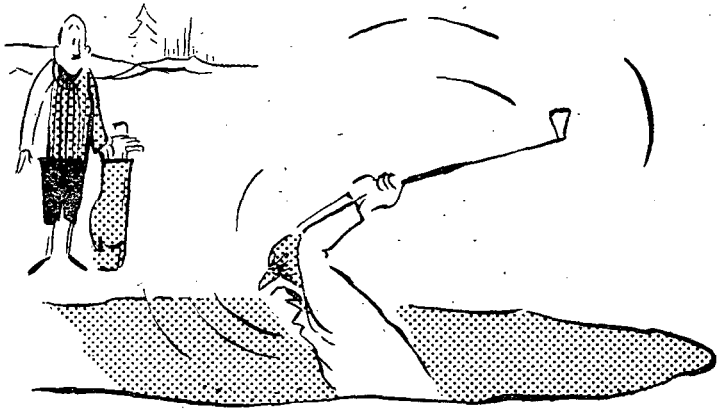

SAND BLASTER

GOOD LIE

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GOLF IS ONLY A GAME

. . . or, at least, so *non-golfers* think. To them, the incidents portrayed in the following three cartoons will probably appear exaggerated and even ridiculous. Golfers, however, will appreciate them as reflecting what is simply normal behaviour.

"D'you mind only nine holes this morning? I'm being married at two-thirty . . ."

"I'm doing my best, Arthur . . ."

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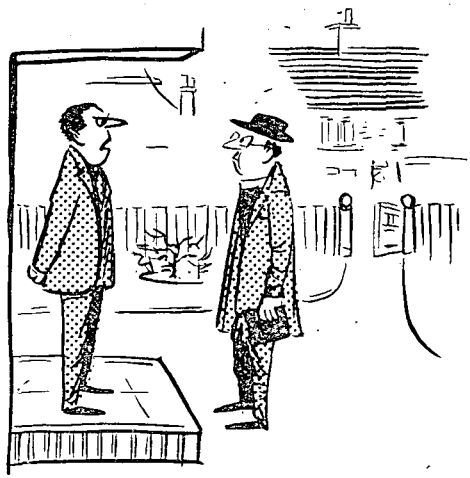

"If it comes to that, I haven't seen much of YOU at the golf club recently."

. . . but there's always the bar

"If he's won it'll be a large Scotch to celebrate. If he's lost, a large Scotch to compensate . . ."

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INQUEST

They loomed out of nowhere

and stood blocking the path

THE coroner didn't worry me. He was nearing sixty-five, and he was sleepy and affable. He liked to contribute something humorous every now and then, in the hope that some reporter would take it up and people would read it and say that old Carson was quite a character. The coroner had sat on too many inquests; he had become saturated and he couldn't take much more. No, the coroner didn't worry me at all. It was his assistant who was the troublemaker.

The coroner's assistant was young; too young. He was mid-twenties and cocky and arrogant. He liked to see a man squirm and be uncomfortable; he loved to probe and needle, in the hope that out of it he could flush something. He was on the way up and he was using all the short cuts to get there fast. He had been that way with every witness and he wasn't going to make an exception of me.

It wasn't the first time I had been in a witness box. I knew that all they wanted was for me to answer the questions clearly and give them the plain facts. True, a man had died, but all they wanted was to establish how and why. It was as simple as that.

The coroner asked my name and address and I told him. Then he asked how I came to be at the motel in the first place. I said I had received an anonymous phone call that my wife was at the motel. I drove up and went looking for her. That was how I found the body at the foot of the rock steps. I described the position of the body and I finished by telling them that it was I who had called the police to the scene.

The coroner thanked me and then looked across at his

by E. J. Bailey

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assistant. That had been the pattern all the way through. The coroner made the introductions and the young one took it from there. He didn't waste any time.

"Mr. Harvey, why should you be concerned at the possibility your wife was staying at a motel?"

"She's my wife, and I naturally assumed she was with some other man."

"Would that have bothered you unduly?"

"Of course it would."

"Mr. Harvey, your wife left you a year ago and she is currently awaiting a divorce hearing. She is charging you with neglect and cruelty. During that year you have been aware of her address, yet you never once contacted her. Why the sudden interest?"

"She's still my wife. I suppose a man has the right to be jealous when he believes his wife is with someone else. I wouldn't class this as unreasonable, irrespective of the circumstances."

"Didn't it strike you as a stupid thing for your wife to do—to go to a motel with another man, with her divorce pending?"

"Who knows what a woman will do?"

"But as it turned out, your wife was not at the motel, nor had she ever been there."

"That is correct."

"All right, we will assume for the moment that you *did* receive this phone call and as an outraged husband you set forth to accost your wife and her lover. Tell me, why did you snoop around the motel grounds looking for your wife? Why not simply go to the reception office and ask for her?"

"It could have been embarrassing."

"For whom? You, your wife, or the motel people?"

"Everyone concerned, especially the other man."

"Oh, yes, the other man who, like your wife, was never at the motel. However, let's look more closely at your approach to the motel grounds. As other witnesses have testified, the Lakeview Motel is reached by a connecting road five miles off the main northern highway. It doesn't conform to the usual modern motel pattern for at least two reasons. It is not situated on a highway or main road; and the cabins are scattered over a good ten acres. It is, in fact, fairly secluded and is popularly known as the honeymooners' hotel. It's even advertised as such.

"Had you ever been there before, or driven past, or even read a brochure on the Lakeview Motel?"

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"No."

"You must have been surprised when you saw it?"

"I wasn't thinking about the landscaping when I drove up."

"Of course, you weren't. My error. You were thinking of your wife. You were thinking of her all the time. So you got out of your car, which you had parked well beyond the motel entranceway, and you walked through the scrub, past the cabins and towards the lake. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"Tell me again—what did you have in mind? Was it a cabin-by-cabin inspection?"

"I suppose so. I was pretty low. All I wanted was to see her and talk to her. Maybe, deep down, I thought it might be a time to patch things up. It really hit me when I thought of Lois with another man."

"You mean it made you feel mad, all steamed up?"

"No, as I said, it made me feel low, miserable, dejected. I kept asking myself what had gone wrong between us . . . when had it all started . . . what I could do about it in the future."

"According to your wife, it all started the week you were married and it kept on for three years."

"That's unreasonable. It wasn't that bad. We had our fights, but not all the time. We had a lot of fun."

"All right; I'll leave that for the moment. Let's get back to you and your meanderings through the motel grounds. How long would you say you were walking around the area before you came across the deceased?"

"Five, ten minutes . . . no more."

"You couldn't have covered many cabins in that short space of time."

"One, perhaps two."

"And you saw no-one?"

"That's correct."

"Tell me, Mr. Harvey, what was your *modus operandi*?"

"You mean, how did I check on a cabin?"

"Yes. Did you knock on the door?"

"No. I just looked around."

"How? Did you part the fronds of every tree fern? Did you check under the floor joists? Did you, perhaps, take a quick peek through a slit in the curtains?"

"I don't know what you're getting at. I simply looked around. I thought I made that clear."

"No, you didn't make it clear, Mr. Harvey. You didn't make it at all clear. Now let us get down to cases. There

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are ten cabins at the motel. They are situated thus: one near the entrance, six scattered through light timber and scrub, and three on the lake front itself. On the day in question eight were occupied, all by honeymoon couples. At the end of the day there were seven couples and one widow."

"I know. I'm as sorry as anyone else."

"I trust you are. It was a terrible tragedy. But to get back to the point at issue. How many cabins did you check, which ones were they and, above all, how did you make your inspection? Look, here is a map showing the grounds and the location of all the cabins. You will observe that I have dotted in with coloured pencil the movements of all the couples in the hour preceding your discovery of the body. Will you now dot in your own movements?"

I was glad I had summed up this man before I entered the box. He was out to nail someone, and I didn't want that someone to be me. I had kept cool but it hadn't been easy. He was smug and secure because he was protected by the law. Every now and then, by his mannerisms and tone of voice, he reminded me of a young lieutenant who took over our squad for a few months. You only had to step out of line a fraction and the lieutenant would throw the book at you.

I thought back to the Saturday afternoon as I picked up the pencil and started to trace my movements. I began at the point where I left the road and went into the scrub. He watched me all the time. When I had finished he took the chart and studied it, and then he handed it to the coroner.

"So you passed two cabins. Now, once more, what did you do at each cabin?"

"I looked around."

"Mr. Harvey, either deliberately or stupidly you are evading the issue. How closely did you look around? How thoroughly?"

"Not very thoroughly, I'm afraid. Perhaps even then I was feeling that the whole thing was a wild-goose chase."

"Nevertheless you persisted. You didn't turn back but followed the track down to the lake?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear any sounds from the lake which would indicate people were there? Laughter—boat noises? Anything like that?"

"I can't recall. Perhaps I did and this made me go on. I couldn't swear to it. In any case, I never got as far as the lake."

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"No, but you did get close—close enough to see anyone who was on the small beach. Yet you maintain that at no time did you see anyone. Is that so?"

"That's correct. I saw no-one at any time, until I saw the body."

"You saw the body at the foot of the stone steps?"

"Yes. I looked down and there he was, crumpled and bleeding at the mouth. I knew he was dead."

"Are you accustomed to making such snap decisions? You were thirty feet up, yet you knew he was dead."

"I've seen dead men before."

"Of course, you served with a commando unit in World War II, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And you're a big man, still in very good shape."

"I wouldn't say that. I'm forty-two years old."

"But your health is good?"

"It's average for a man my age."

"Average, Mr. Harvey?"

"That's right."

"You are, I would say, around one hundred and eighty stripped, and you work out three nights a week in a gym. Yet you say your health is only average?"

It was coming out now—the real undermining. I had expected it, though not to this extent. So far he hadn't rattled me but it was becoming harder to hold back. I wondered who had told him about the gym, but it didn't matter a great deal. His kind ran to a pattern. They loved nothing better than to smear a man in front of an audience.

"I'm like anyone else. Sometimes I'm ill."

"How ill?"

"It varies. I could get some bug in my bloodstream that lays me up for a few days. Sometimes I get tired. I always look forward to my annual vacation. If I've said anything that makes me stand out from a million other men of my age then I'd be surprised."

"I don't want your opinion, Mr. Harvey; I simply want your answer. Now . . . your wife says you change mood frequently and for no apparent reason. That you can be sadistic. For example, there is the incident of your wife's dog. Why did you kill the dog, Mr. Harvey?"

The dog! That was really digging up ancient history. I had to concentrate even to remember the useless hound. This man must have spent hours with Lois. I could picture them

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sitting in the convertible. He would be smooth and persistent all the time, and Lois wouldn't be hard to brainwash. She would tell him everything he wanted to know. Oh, yes, Lois would really lay it on about her dog. But it was so long ago. There had to be a reason, but I couldn't remember. When it did come to me I knew they would understand, because I always had a good reason for anything I did.

"Can I refresh your memory?"

"By all means. A man can't recall every incident in forty-two years."

"You were on the lawn with the dog when suddenly you killed him. Why, Mr. Harvey? Why did you kill the dog?"

"The lawn! That's right. Why, of course, the dog was mad. He had saliva in and about his mouth."

"Rabies?"

"I suppose so. All I thought about were the kids who lived on either side of us. At first I intended to chain up the dog and have him looked at, but he growled and I knew he was going to jump me, so I got in first."

"But the vet said there was nothing wrong with him."

"I didn't know that. I didn't know the vet saw the dog."

"Your wife took him along."

"She didn't tell me."

"Perhaps not, but she told me, Mr. Harvey. And the vet looked up his records and confirmed that the dog was normal, friendly and harmless. Yet you killed him."

"That's your opinion, about the dog. I was there and the dog was two feet away. Sometimes a man has to act fast."

"By reflex?"

"That's right."

"Can we agree upon this point. You are a man who is accustomed to death and violence, born of your commando days. You are a man who acts instinctively if he senses danger, and you believe in getting in first."

"Yes."

"But there could be times when other people do not see this danger, as in the case of the mad dog who was not mad."

"It's a matter of opinion about the dog, as I said. I was there facing him. It wasn't the time to arrange for a blood count."

"Precisely. You had to act fast, on instinct."

"Yes."

"All right. Now let us get back to the unfortunate young man who died in the motel grounds. You have heard other

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witnesses agree that this man was physically fit, twenty-two years old, and a member of a rambling club. Doesn't it strike you as odd that such a man should be so clumsy as to fall down the steps?"

"I suppose he was in a hurry."

"Why? He was merely going back to their cabin to fetch his wife's sunglasses. Why should he want to set up a new world record?"

"How should I know? I never met him before."

"Mr. Harvey, I think it's time we got down to cases. Now I put it to you this way. You never received a phone call about your wife being at the motel. Who would want to phone you, even if she were there? I've talked to your friends and your neighbours and those with whom you work. They all feel the same way; they maintain you couldn't care less what your wife did. No, I believe you came to this motel for one purpose—to carry out a Peeping Tom assignment. You were doing just this when Phillips saw you."

"Are you out of your mind?"

"No, but were you out of yours, Mr. Harvey?"

"What are you getting at?"

"Just this. You are observed in your activities and immediately sum up the consequences. You sense a great danger and you act in keeping with your background. You strike first. You push this man down the steps and he died. Then you phone the police. Are not these the facts, Mr. Harvey?"

"*No*. How can you even dream such crazy ideas?"

I knew I had raised my voice but I couldn't help it. Inch by inch, this man was pegging me back. This man who, by virtue of some law degree, was now a superior person who pushed and slapped and prodded those not so fortunate. This man, who was still wet behind the ears and who had never known anything but a full belly and a warm bed. What did this man know of life? Had he ever waded through thigh-deep swamps, or lain down in the mud like a pig, while all the time the enemy was out there unseen? Had he ever looked up from a hole in the ground and seen a man, feet astride, both hands gripping the sword, about to bring it down in the death arc? The sword! That was something I could never forget. The sword, and the look on the face of the enemy.

But because he had no sword on his mind the young one continued with the probe. There was a difference though, unless I imagined it. The tone of his voice had changed; it

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was warmer, almost friendly. Perhaps this meant he had almost given up—that it was close to the end of the ordeal.

"Remember, Mr. Harvey, this is not a murder trial. If a man is attacked and defends himself then it is no crime. But Phillips is dead, so only you can tell us what happened."

"I've already told you. I've told you and the others a hundred times. I got a call . . ."

"Not that, Mr. Harvey—tell us about Phillips. It intrigues me because I cannot understand why you should have been scared of Phillips. True, he was younger, but only half your size. Now I can only see it one way. Phillips had something in his hand and he was going to attack you. What was it? A piece of sandstone, perhaps?"

Phillips, Phillips, all the time Phillips! Who the hell cared about Phillips? He was another face in the crowd. They were all the same . . . just faces. One minute, one second before, and you didn't know they existed. Then they loomed out of nowhere and they stood there, blocking the path. They became vital in a man's struggle to survive.

"No, not sandstone. I mean—how should I know what Phillips had in his hand?"

"Because you were there, remember? But you say it wasn't a piece of stone. Brushwood, then? A branch, a piece of dead log, something . . . anything?"

The courtroom was a sea of faces, of staring, expressionless faces. The whites, the pinks, the tans, all merged into one blob that flowed up to the dais, so that the coroner, his assistant and I were on an island, and no one else mattered. I noticed that the old coroner was still awake and watching, whereas I was getting tired. It was becoming an effort to concentrate.

"Mr. Harvey, we are waiting. All we want to know is what he had which made you sense danger. If it wasn't a stone, or timber, then what was it?"

I had tried. God, how I had tried. But last time there had been no young man who needled, then hammered over and over. Last time there had only been a coroner in a hurry.

I couldn't remember what he had asked me, but I knew it paid to be polite and not shout in the courtroom. This always created a good impression. That was what they said about me the last time. They said I was a very good witness.

"Would you please repeat the question?"

"Certainly, Mr. Harvey. What did Phillips use to threaten you?"

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I had it then. In one sweet moment of remembrance I had everything in front of my eyes, in unbroken sequence.

"A sword!"

"I see. He came at you with a sword."

"That's right. I had to do something, and fast. I tackled him and when he was down I gave him a couple of judo chops, at the back of the neck. Then I threw him down the stone steps. I was dead lucky. Another second and it would have been all over."

"What would have been all over, Mr. Harvey?"

"He would have got me with the sword. Have you ever seen a headless body? It's terrible. It's something you can never forget."

I was better now. I had got it out of my system and I could see that they were impressed. No-one was asking me questions but I wanted them to. I wanted to talk about the other times. The faces about me were back in focus and I knew they were all listening.

"... and this couple. The girl was the worst. She had one of those short daggers and she was coming behind me. I had to be quick that time, I had to rely on the old reflexes. But you mightn't remember it. Six years ago, down on the south coast. I kept all the clippings from the newspapers.

"People. You never know about people—what they will do. You think they're okay and they jump you when you least expect it. I just don't want to die, that's all. I don't want to get killed.

"There was this woman four years ago. Not much to look at. Old clothes like a refugee. You can never trust a reffo. You can tell when they have something planted under the rags. I picked it a mile off and I moved in ..."

Suddenly I was too tired to talk any more. I was too damn tired. All I wanted was to get out of it ... get back to base where I could rest up for a few days. That was all I wanted.

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SOLUTION TO TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD (PAGE 167)

ACROSS. 1, Amoeba. 4, Blood. 7, Aversion. 9, Anna. 10, Heraldic. 12, Trojan. 14, Venice. 16, Avifauna. 18, Last. 20, Internee. 21, Eagle. 22, Psalms.

DOWN. 1, Awash. 2, Overrun. 3, Basilica. 4, Bun. 5, Oven. 6, Domain. 8, Omit. 11, Crofters. 13, Journal. 14, Volume. 15, Even. 17, Avers. 19, Stag. 20, Ice.

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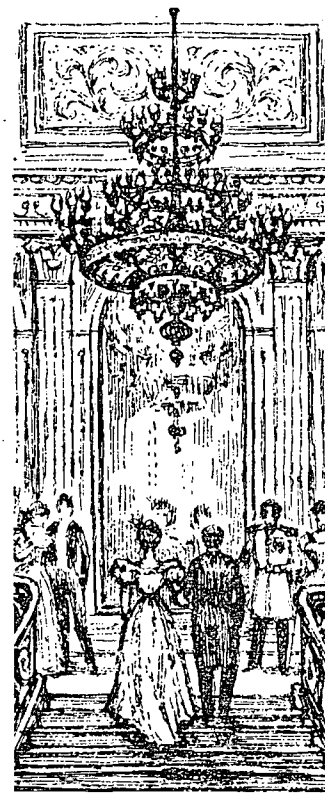
GALLERY of GREATS

AN ANNA ROUND HIS NECK

by CHEKHOV



AFTER the wedding there was not even a light meal; the bride and groom drank a glass of champagne, changed their clothes, and went off to the station. Instead of a cheerful wedding-ball and supper, instead of music and dancing, a pilgrimage to a monastery a hundred and fifty miles away.

Many people approved of this, saying that Modest Alexeich was not young and had already attained a high position in the civil service, and that a noisy wedding might perhaps have seemed a little unsuitable; and besides, it is boring to listen to music when a fifty-two-year-old official marries a girl who is barely eighteen. They also said that Modest Alexeich, as a man of principle, had planned this pilgrimage on purpose to give his young wife to understand that even in marriage he gave first place to religion and morality.

The couple were seen off at the station. A crowd of colleagues and relatives stood with glasses in their hands, waiting to cheer as the train left, and Peter Leontyich, the bride's father, wearing a top hat and the tailcoat of his teacher's uniform, already drunk and very pale; kept stretching up his

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glass towards the window and saying in an imploring tone, "Anyuta! Anya! Anya, just a word!"

Anna leaned out of the window towards him, and he whispered something to her, enveloping her in stale wine-fumes, blowing into her ear—it was impossible to understand what he was saying—and making the sign of the cross over her face and breast and hands, while his breath came unsteadily and tears glistened in his eyes. Anya's brothers, Petya and Andryusha, schoolboys, tugged at his coat from behind and whispered in embarrassment, "Papa, stop it . . . Don't, Papa . . ."

When the train moved Anna saw her father running a little way after it, staggering and splashing wine out of his glass, and saw how pathetic, kind, and guilty he looked.

"Hurrah!" he shouted.

The newly-married pair remained alone. Modest Alexeich looked round the compartment, distributed their things on the racks, and sat down, smiling, opposite his young wife. He was an official of medium height, rather round and plump and very well nourished, with long whiskers but no moustache, and his round, shaven, sharply-defined chin looked like a heel. The most characteristic thing about his face was the absence of a moustache, the freshly-shaven bare place which gradually merged into fat cheeks quivering like a jelly. His demeanour was staid, his movements deliberate, his manners suave.

"I cannot help recalling just now a certain circumstance," he said, smiling. "Five years ago, when Kosorotov was given the Order of St. Anne, second class, and called to thank the Governor, his Excellency expressed himself in these terms, 'Well, now you have three Annas, one in your buttonhole and two hanging round your neck.' I must tell you that at the time Kosorotov's wife, a shrewish and trivial creature, whose name is Anna, had just returned to him. I hope that when I receive my Anna of the second class, his Excellency will not have occasion to say the same thing to me."

He smiled with his little eyes. And she smiled too, agitated by the thought that at any moment this man might kiss her with his moist, full lips and that she no longer had the right to refuse him. The soft movements of his plump body frightened her; she felt both alarmed and revolted. He stood up and hurriedly removed the order he wore round his neck, took off his coat and waistcoat and put on his dressing-gown.

"There!" he said, sitting down beside Anya.

She was remembering how painful the wedding ceremony

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had been, when it had seemed to her that the priest, and the guests, and everybody in the church had looked at her sadly —why, why was she, such a nice pretty girl, marrying that dull, elderly gentleman? This morning she had been delighted that everything was going so well for her, but during the ceremony and now in the railway carriage she felt guilty, cheated, and ridiculous. She had married a rich man, but all the same she had no money, her wedding clothes had not been paid for, and today, when her father and brothers were seeing her off, she could tell from their faces that they hadn't a single copeck. Would they have any supper tonight? And what about tomorrow? And for some reason she saw her father and the boys sitting at that moment without her, hungry and experiencing the same distress as on the first evening after her mother's funeral.

Oh, how unhappy I am! she thought. Why am I so unhappy?

With the awkwardness of a solid citizen unaccustomed to dealing with women, Modest Alexeich touched her waist and patted her shoulder, while she thought of money, of her mother, and of her mother's death. When her mother died, her father, Peter Leontyich, a teacher of calligraphy and drawing in the high school, began to drink, and they felt the pinch; the boys had no boots or galoshes, their father was taken before the magistrate, the court bailiff came and made an inventory of the furniture... What shame! Anya had had to look after her drunken father, mend her brothers' stockings, go to market, and when she was complimented on her beauty, youth and elegant manners, she thought the whole world could see her cheap hat and the holes in her shoes smeared over with ink. And at night tears and the importunate, worrying thought that at any moment her father's weakness would get him dismissed from the school and that he would not be able to endure it, but would die like her mother.

But now some of the ladies among their acquaintances bestirred themselves and began to look for a good husband for Anna. Before long they had found this same Modest Alexeich, not young or handsome, but well off. He had about a hundred thousand in the bank and a family estate which he let to tenants. He was a man of principle and stood well with his Excellency; it would cost him nothing, they told Anna, to get a note from his Excellency to the headmaster of the school, or even to the Director of Education, to prevent Peter Leontyich's dismissal...

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As she recalled these details, the sudden sound of music and voices was borne in through the window. The train had stopped at a halt. Among the crowd beyond the platform somebody was playing lively tunes on an accordion and a cheap, squeaky fiddle, and from behind the tall birches and poplars, and the summer villas flooded with moonlight, came the strains of a military band—evidently a dance was in progress. On the platform strolled summer visitors and people whom the fine weather had brought out from the town for a breath of fresh air. Artynov, who owned the whole summer colony, was there too, a rich, tall, heavily-built, dark-haired man with protruding eyes, like an Armenian in the face, and oddly dressed. He was wearing a shirt open down the front, high boots with spurs, and a long black cloak hanging from his shoulders and trailing on the ground like a train. Two borzois were at his heels, their sharp muzzles lowered.

Anya's eyes still glistened with tears, but she had already forgotten all about her mother, and money, and her marriage, and was shaking hands with officers she knew and smiling and hurriedly saying, "Good evening! How are you?"

She went out on to the platform at the end of the coach, in the moonlight, and stood so that everybody could see her in her magnificent new dress and hat. "Why have we stopped?"

"This is a loop-line," she was told, "and they are waiting for the mail train."

She saw that Artynov was watching her, and she coquettishly narrowed her eyes and began to speak French in a loud

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◆ Anton Chekhov is often accused of being too melancholy. He was extremely sensitive to people—to lives wasted, lovers parting, dreams crumbling—but he had a lighter side as well.

Born in the Ukraine, he later moved to Moscow to take a degree in medicine. As a doctor he supplemented his income by writing humorous stories for newspapers and established a literary reputation with the publication of two collected volumes. He then turned to writing for the theatre. After a disastrous production of his second play *The Seagull*, it was again produced and won him wide acclaim—and the leading lady, Olga Knipper, whom he married in 1901.

Three years later, Chekhov died at the age of forty-four, leaving a legacy of novels, stories and plays that all reflect the social structure of the Russia of his time, yet have characters that will remain timeless.

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voice, and because her own voice sounded so splendid, because of the music, and the moon reflected in the pond—because Artynov, who was well known as a rake and Don Juan, was watching her with eager curiosity, and because everybody was cheerful, she felt suddenly gay, and when the train moved and her officer acquaintances saluted her by way of goodbye, she was humming the pólka whose sound the military band, pounding away there behind the trees, sent in pursuit of her; and she returned to their compartment feeling as though something at the halt had convinced her that she could not fail to be happy, in spite of everything.

The couple spent two days in the monastery and then returned to the town. They lived in an official flat. When Modest Alexeich went to his office, Anya played the piano, or wept with boredom, or lay on the couch reading novels or looking through a fashion paper. At dinner Modest Alexeich ate a great deal and talked about politics, appointments, transfers, and awards, about the necessity for hard work, about how family life is not a pleasure but a duty, about how one must take care of the copecks and the roubles will take care of themselves, and about how he held religion and morals in higher esteem than anything else on earth. And holding his knife in his fist like a sword, he said, "Every man ought to have his obligations."

And Anya listened to him and was afraid, could not eat, and usually rose from the table hungry. After dinner her husband rested for a time, snoring loudly, and she went to see her family. Her father and the boys looked at her rather peculiarly, as though just before she came in they had been criticising her for marrying for his money a dreary bore whom she did not love; her rustling dresses, bracelets, and general appearance of a lady embarrassed and offended them; in her presence they were a little confused and did not know what to talk to her about; but all the same they still loved her as much as before, and they had not yet got used to dining without her. She would sit down with them and eat cabbage soup, buckwheat porridge, and potatoes fried in mutton fat and smelling like tallow candles. Peter Leontyich poured out a glass of vodka with shaking hands and drank it off quickly, greedily and with aversion, then he drank a second, and a third. Petya and Andryusha, pale-faced, thin little boys with big eyes, would take hold of the decanter and say worriedly, "Don't, Papa . . . That's enough, Papa . . ."

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Anya would be anxious also and beg him not to drink any more, and he would fly into a sudden rage and thump his fist on the table.

"I won't allow anybody to dictate to me!" he would shout. "Brats! I'll turn the lot of you out!"

But his voice revealed his weakness and goodness and nobody was afraid of him. After dinner he usually dressed himself up; pale-faced, with cuts on his chin from shaving, he would stand a full half-hour craning his thin neck and smartening himself up in front of the mirror, combing his hair, twisting his black moustache, spraying himself with scent, knotting his tie; then he put on his gloves and top hat and went off to his private pupils. If it was a holiday he stayed at home and painted or played the wheezy, growling harmonium, trying to draw melodious sounds from it and humming an accompaniment, or growing angry with the boys; "Wretches! Scoundrels! You've ruined the instrument!"

In the evenings Anya's husband played cards with the colleagues who lived in official quarters under the same roof with him. At such times the officials' wives, unattractive, tastelessly dressed, as coarse as kitchen maids, would call, and the flat was filled with gossip as ugly and tasteless as the women themselves. It sometimes happened that Modest Alexeich went to the theatre with Anya. In the intervals he did not allow her to stir a step away from him, but walked with her on his arm through the corridors and about the foyer.

After exchanging bows with anybody he would immediately whisper to Anya, "He's high in the service, a State Councillor—on visiting terms with his Excellency," or "Well-to-do . . . owns his house." When they passed the buffet Anya would very much have liked something sweet; she loved chocolate and apple tarts, but she had no money and was too shy to ask her husband. He would take up a pear, squeeze it in his fingers and ask undecidedly, "How much?"

"Twenty-five copecks."

"Well, really!" he would say, putting the pear back; and because it was awkward to leave the buffet without buying anything, he would order seltzer-water and drink the whole bottle himself, making his eyes water; at such times Anya hated him.

Or, suddenly going red all over, he would say hurriedly, "Bow to that old lady!"

"But I don't know her."

"That doesn't matter. She is the wife of the Director of

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the Treasury Office. Bow, I tell you," he would mutter insistently. "Your head won't fall off."

Anya bowed, and her head never did fall off, but she suffered torments. She did everything her husband wished, while she raged at herself for having been taken in by him like the silliest little ninny. She had married him only for money, and yet she had less now than before her marriage. At least then she had a few coins from her father, but now not a copeck. She could neither take any by stealth nor ask for it; she was afraid of her husband and trembled before him. It seemed to her that she had nursed her fear of this man in her heart for a very long time.

At one time, when she was a child, the high-school headmaster had represented the most dread and awe-inspiring powers, looming like a thundercloud or advancing with crushing weight like a railway engine; another such power, always spoken of with fear in the house, was his Excellency; there were a dozen lesser powers, including the stern, implacable masters in the school, with their clean-shaven upper lips, and now, finally, there was Modest Alexeich, the man of principle, who resembled the headmaster even in looks. In Anya's imagination all these powers fused into one and advanced on the weak and erring—like her father—in the shape of a terrible, enormous white bear; and she was afraid to protest but met with a forced smile and an expression of feigned pleasure the coarse caresses and defiling embraces that filled her with horror.

Only once did Peter Leontyich dare to ask his son-in-law for a loan of fifty roubles to settle an unpleasant debt, but what an ordeal it was!

"Very well, I will give it you," said Modest Alexeich, "but I warn you that in future I shall not help you until you stop drinking. For a man who is in the service of the government, it is a disgraceful failing. I cannot refrain from reminding you of the well-known fact that many capable individuals have been ruined by this passion, whereas had they been abstinent, they might well, with time, have attained very high rank."

The long periods went rolling on; "inasmuch as..." "arising out of that assumption..." "in view of what has just been stated..." while poor Peter Leontyich suffered agonies of humiliation and experienced a strong desire for a drink.

The boys, when they came to visit Anya, usually in shabby trousers, with holes in their boots, also had to listen to sermons.

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"Every man ought to have his obligations!" Modest Alexeich told them.

He never parted with money. On the other hand, he gave Anya rings, bracelets, and brooches, remarking that these were good things to possess against a rainy day. He often opened her drawers and carried out an inspection to see that all the things were safe.

Meanwhile winter set in. Long before Christmas there was an announcement in the local paper that the usual winter ball was to take place in the Assembly Rooms on December 29th. Every evening, after his game of cards, Modest Alexeich talked in excited whispers with the wives of his colleagues, throwing anxious glances at Anya, and then spent a long time thoughtfully pacing the room.

At last, late one evening, he stopped in front of Anya and said, "You must get a ball-dress. Do you understand? Only please ask the advice of Maria Grigoryevna and Natalya Kuzminishna."

And he gave her a hundred roubles. She took them; but when she ordered her ball-dress she did not consult anybody, only talked to her father and tried to imagine how her mother would have dressed for the ball. Her dead mother had always dressed in the latest fashion and always taken pains with Anya and dressed her exquisitely, like a doll; and she had taught her to speak French and to dance the mazurka superlatively well (before her marriage she had been a governess for five years). Like her mother, Anya knew how to make a new dress out of an old one, clean gloves with benzine, and hire *bijoux*; and, like her mother again, she could half close her eyes, lisp, adopt elegant poses, go into raptures when necessary, or look sad and enigmatic. From her father she had inherited dark eyes and hair, highly strung nerves, and his way of always making the best of his appearance.

When, half an hour before they left for the ball, Modest Alexeich came into her room without his frockcoat, in order to put his order round his neck in front of her long mirror, he was enchanted by her beauty and the brilliant freshness and airiness of her dress, stroked his whiskers in a self-satisfied manner and said, "How nice you look... how very nice! Anyuta!" he went on, with sudden solemnity, "I have made you happy, and today you can make me happy. I beg you to introduce yourself to his Excellency's good lady. In God's name! Through her I might receive the senior secretaryship!"

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They went to the ball. Here were the Assembly Rooms, the porter at the entrance, the ante-room with its coat pegs, fur coats, scurrying lackeys, ladies in low-necked gowns shielding themselves from the draught with their fans, and smell of gas and soldiers.

As Anya mounted the stairs on her husband's arm, the sight of her own reflection, full length and brightly illuminated by a multitude of lights, in an enormous mirror, awakened in her heart a feeling of gladness and the same anticipation of happiness as she had experienced at the railway halt that moonlit night. She walked proudly and confidently, conscious for the first time that she was a lady and not a little girl, and involuntarily imitating her dead mother in her gait and carriage. For the first time in her life she felt rich and free. Even the presence of her husband did not embarrass her, since from the moment she crossed the threshold she had instinctively sensed that the proximity of her elderly husband in no way detracted from her but on the contrary invested her with the piquant mystery men like so much.

In the great ballroom the orchestra was already in full swing and dancing had begun. Plunged, after their official flat, into all the impressions of bright lights, colour, music and noise, Anya threw a glance round the room, and thought, Oh, how splendid! and at once picked out in the crowd all her acquaintances, everybody she had met at evening parties or out walking, all the officers, schoolmasters, lawyers, officials, landowners, his Excellency, Artynov, the great ladies, beautiful or plain, elaborately dressed and extremely *décolletées*, who had already taken up their positions among the stalls of the charity bazaar, ready to begin trading for the benefit of the poor. An enormous officer, wearing epaulettes—she had met him in Old Kiev Street when she was a schoolgirl and now could not remember his name—sprang up as if out of the ground in front of her and asked her for a waltz, and she whirled away from her husband, feeling as though she were in a sailing-boat in a violent storm and he was left behind on the distant shore . . .

With passionate enthusiasm she danced the waltz, and a polka, and a quadrille, passing from partner to partner, dizzy with the music and the noise, mixing French and Russian words, lisping, laughing, and thinking neither of her husband nor of anybody or anything else. She was a success with the men, that was clear, and indeed it was inevitable; she was breathless with excitement, feverishly clutched her fan, and felt very thirsty. Her father, Peter Leontyich, in crumpled tails

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that smelt of benzine, came up to her, holding out a saucer of pink icecream.

"You are charming tonight," he said, gazing at her with immense pleasure, "and I have never been so sorry that you were in such a hurry to get married . . . Why? I know you did it for our sakes, but . . ." With shaking hands he pulled out a packet of notes and said, "I was paid for some lessons today, and I can settle my debt to your husband."

She thrust the saucer into his hands and was pounced on and swept away by somebody else, catching a glimpse over her cavalier's shoulder of her father gliding over the polished floor, putting his arm round a lady, and dashing off round the room with her.

How nice he is when he's sober! she thought.

She danced the mazurka with the enormous officer. Solemnly and heavily, like a carcase in uniform, he walked along, twisted his shoulders and chest, stamped almost imperceptibly —he was terribly unwilling to dance—but she fluttered by his side, teasing him with her beauty and her bare neck; her eyes blazed with enthusiasm, her movements were full of passion, while he grew steadily more indifferent, and proffered his arm with the gracious condescension of a king.

"Bravo, bravo!" said the spectators.

Little by little even the enormous officer was carried away; he grew animated and excited, yielded to the spell, let himself go and began to move lightly and youthfully, while she only twisted her shoulders and looked arch, as if she was a queen and he a slave, and then it seemed to her that the whole room was watching them, and all these people were spell-bound and full of envy. The enormous officer had hardly had time to thank her before the spectators moved aside and the men drew themselves up rather oddly, with their arms by their sides. It was his Excellency, wearing two stars on his coat, who was coming towards her. Yes, his Excellency was indeed coming to her, since he was staring straight at her and smiling sweetly, and at the same time mumbling his lips, as he always did when he saw a pretty woman.

"Delighted, delighted . . ." he began. "I shall have your husband placed under arrest for concealing such a treasure from us until now. I am the bearer of a message from my wife," he continued, offering her his arm. "You must come and help us . . . Mm, yes . . . We shall have to give you a beauty-prize . . . as they do in America . . . Mm . . . yes. The Americans . . . My wife is waiting impatiently for you."

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He led her into a stall in the shape of a little peasant hut and up to an elderly lady, the lower part of whose face was disproportionately big, so that she looked as if she was holding a large stone in her mouth.

"Come and help," she said in a drawling nasal voice. "All the pretty ladies are working in the charity bazaar, and you are the only one who is idle, for some reason. Why won't you help us?"

She went away and Anya took her place beside a silver samovar and some cups. She began to do a brisk trade at once. She would not accept less than a rouble for a cup of tea, and she made the enormous officer drink three cups. Artynov, the rich man with the protruding eyes, approached, wheezing asthmatically and wearing not the strange costume in which Anya had seen him in the summer, but tails like everybody else. Without taking his eyes off her, he drank a glass of champagne, for which he paid a hundred roubles, and then had a cup of tea and gave another hundred—and all without a word, wheezing with asthma . . . Anya invited customers in and took money from them, and was already profoundly certain that her smiles and glances afforded them nothing but the greatest pleasure. She now understood that she was created exclusively for this noisy, brilliant, laughing life with its music, dances, and admirers, and her long-standing terror of some power advancing upon and threatening to crush her seemed ridiculous; she no longer feared anybody, and her only regret was that her mother was not there to rejoice with her in her success.

Peter Leontyich, pale by now but still firm on his feet, came up to the stall and asked for a glass of cognac. Anya blushed, expecting him to say something unsuitable (she was already ashamed that her father was so poor and so ordinary), but he drank his cognac, threw down ten roubles out of his packet, and walked sedately away without saying a word. A little later she saw him dancing the *grand rond* with his partner, and this time he was staggering and shouting, to the great confusion of his lady, and Anya remembered that three years ago at the ball he had staggered and shouted in the same way—and ended by being taken home to bed by a police officer; and the following day the headmaster had threatened him with dismissal. How untimely these memories seemed!

When the samovars on the stalls were extinguished and the weary charitable ladies handed their takings to the elderly lady with a stone in her mouth, Artynov took Anya on his arm to

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the room where supper was served for all those who had taken part in the bazaar. There were about twenty people, not more, having supper, but it was very lively.

His Excellency proposed a toast: "In this luxurious dining room it is fitting that we should drink to the success of the cheap dining rooms which were the object of our bazaar today." A brigadier-general proposed a toast "to the power before which even the artillery quails," and everybody clinked glasses with the ladies. It was all very gay.

When somebody took Anya home, it was already growing light and cooks were on their way to market. Gay, intoxicated, full of new impressions and extremely weary, she undressed, fell into bed and was instantly asleep.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the maid wakened her and announced that Mr. Artynov had called. She dressed quickly and went into the drawing room. Soon after Artynov left, his Excellency arrived to thank her for helping with the bazaar. Casting saccharine looks at her and mumbling his lips, he kissed her hand, asked permission to call again, and departed, and she stood in the middle of the room, amazed and enchanted, unable to believe that this change in her life, an astonishing change, could have happened so quickly; and at that moment her husband, Modest Alexeich, walked in. . . . He stood before her with exactly the same ingratiating, sugary, slavishly deferential expression that she was accustomed to seeing on his face in the presence of the powerful and distinguished; and triumphantly, indignantly, contemptuously, sure that nothing would happen to her for it, she said, pronouncing every word with great distinctness, "Go away, stupid!"

After this, Anya never had a free day, since she was always going out to picnics, or walking, or to the play. She returned home every day towards morning, and went to bed on the floor of the drawing room, afterwards movingly telling everybody how she slept under the flowers. She needed a great deal of money, but she was no longer afraid of Modest Alexeich and spent his money as if it were her own; she did not ask him for any, or demand it, merely sent him her bills, or notes saying,

Give the bearer of this 200 roubles,
or 100 roubles.
Settle immediately.

At Easter, Modest Alexeich received the Order of St. Anne,

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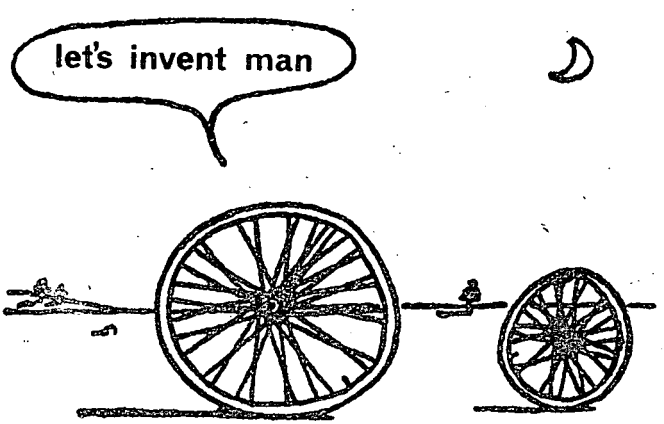
second class. When he went to express his thanks, his Excellency laid aside his newspaper and settled back in his armchair.

"Well, now you have three Annas," he said, studying his white hands with their pink nails, "one in your buttonhole and two round your neck."

Modest Alexeich laid two fingers to his lips, for fear of laughing too loud, and said, "Now we must expect the appearance in the world of a little Vladimir. May I venture to ask your Excellency to be godfather?"

He was referring to the Order of St. Vladimir, fourth class, and he had already begun to imagine himself repeating his witty remark, so successful in its resourcefulness and audacity, everywhere he went; he intended to make another, equally successful, but his Excellency was once more buried in his newspaper and only nodded his head . . .

And Anya went on driving behind *troikas*, hunting with Artynov, taking part in one-act plays, and going out to supper, and was less and less frequently with her family. Now they always dined alone. Peter Leontyich drank more heavily than before, there was no money, and the harmonium had long ago been sold for debt. The boys no longer allowed him out alone, and always followed him to see that he did not fall; and when, among the carriages parading on Old Kiev Street, they met Anya in a showy turn-out with Artynov on the box instead of the coachman, Peter Leontyich took off his top hat and seemed about to call out something, but Petya and Andryusha took his arms and said imploringly, "Papa, don't . . . Stop, Papa . . ."



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BETWEEN PLANES

a meeting, a kiss, a mystery

by PETER MACON

ZURICH airport seemed even hotter than Beirut had been, some five jet hours to the south. It was one of those freakish days torn out of the calendar that the Alps serve up once or twice a year, complete with the warm *föhn* wind that just about splits your head in two. And it was the absurd heat, or rather those two lizards playing in it, which began our strange encounter.

If you've been through Klotén airport, you will remember the Butzenbuhl, even if you don't know the name. It's that neat Swiss hillock right across the road from the terminal building which rises up maybe three hundred feet all by itself like a green felt hat. It gives you a far better view of the silver birds flying in and out than you get from the aerodrome observation terrace for twenty-five *rappen*. What was more important on a day like this, it gave you a breath of air.

We landed around eleven-thirty and I had about three hours to wait for the Air France Caravelle on to Paris. So, as soon as I had made sure that my bags were safely out of the belly of the Scandinavia-bound DC-7 which had brought me this far, I had myself stamped into Switzerland proper at the passport control counter, and strolled across to the Butzenbuhl for a leg-stretch before lunch.

That stifling day was a Sunday and half Zürich seemed to have had the same idea. The aerodrome carpark was crammed with nicely-polished family cars, shimmering like coloured jellies in the heat, and the meadows at the base of the hill were already dotted with sober Swiss citizens—the men in neatly

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pressed white shirts and the women in cotton dresses which looked as though they had been taken straight out of a shop window and put on. It was all good, calm, hygienic stuff; and though this sort of thing always gets on my nerves after a day or two in Switzerland, right now it made a pleasant change, coming straight after a tough four-months' assignment among the dirt and hysteria of the Middle East.

Near the crest of the Butzenbuhl, there is a twenty-foot granite column with a plump and prosperous eagle squatting on top which serves as a monument to some Swiss air pioneer. A few yards below this, is the clump of bushlike trees I always make for with a newspaper or a notebook. Today I had neither, so I just sat, half in the shade, looking down at the green bowl of hills in which Kloten airport nestles.

Then I heard the two lizards. They were enjoying the sun mightily in the warm, tangled scrub behind me—frisking about and nipping each other's tails and diving up and down after each other under the dry twigs like a pair of dolphins in some waterless ocean. They moved at a brisk pace and were soon out of sight round the corner of a gorse bush.

I reached for a cigarette and began to think about lunch. But just as I tapped the packet, a cut-off cry coming from close beside me brought me to my feet. In the next bay of grass beyond the gorse bush, stood a tall woman in a dark, tailored suit, her hand pressed to her mouth, her jacket in a heap on the ground. As a picture puzzle, it was a pretty sight and not hard to figure out.

"Don't be scared," I called to her. "It's not a snake—just a couple of harmless lizards enjoying themselves. They passed my way a minute ago."

As I walked the few paces over to her, she relaxed at once and laughed; the fingers which had been clenching at her lips ran lightly through a mass of dark-auburn hair as if to brush away a mood. She had a full, rather Jewish face, and she was certainly all woman as she stood there, still panting slightly in her white blouse and dark skirt. So much so that, for the first time in my life, I remember registering a silent vote of thanks to the serpent world.

She replied in English in an accent that was not American or British: "Silly of me. I hope I didn't wake you up or anything. But they did look rather frightening."

"Well," I said, "as you see, things aren't always as sinister as they appear."

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I shall never forget the second sentence she spoke. Already it had struck that odd note which was to persist to the end . . .

"Sometimes," she said, "yet sometimes they are far worse."

I stared for a second. It seemed early in our acquaintance to begin philosophising. So I merely smiled and offered her a cigarette. She sat down again after I had lit it, and I squatted beside her.

After a word about the weather and the *föhn*—did it split her head as it split mine?—we found ourselves looking up at the plump Swiss bird on top of the monument.

I commented, "I bet that air pioneer had a nice Zürich bank account, and a fat insurance policy. I've never seen a less adventurous-looking eagle."

"You sound as if you are rather against prosperity." She smiled.

"Let's say, rather, I am against what it does to people."

Then I added, as a painful thought struck me, "I hope, by the way, that you are not Swiss?"

She threw back her head and laughed, showing two rows of teeth that looked strong enough to grip a swinging trapeze. There was indeed something colourful and circus-like about her whole presence, and though she must have been around forty, I could well imagine her poured into a black corsage with a pair of spangled tights.

"Swiss—good heavens, no. A long way from that! But I know without asking that you are American, and if you distrust prosperity you must be a rather unusual one."

I don't suppose this was meant to be the come-on. In fact I am sure it wasn't. But it gave me the opening to say what had been in my mind from the moment I bent over her to light that first cigarette.

"You are right—I'm an American. As for being an unusual American, there is one good way of finding out and that's to have lunch with me. Will you—if you have nothing better to do? I can't face an airport meal alone."

Before saying anything, she gave the tiniest of smiles. It was the smile of the earthily attractive woman of any race or nation who is doomed to be dated steadily from puberty onwards, and who knows it.

"As you have rescued me from two pythons, how can I refuse?"

Without ceremony, she stretched out her hand for me to pull her up.

I held it slightly longer than was necessary to get her on

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her feet, and again that faint smile appeared: one third pleasure, one third amusement, one third resignation. She was a riddle, and a glorious one, I decided; as we walked across to the aerodrome building, the sticky asphalt road might have been a Persian carpet.

The first answer to the riddle came at the control counter. I was stamped in again by the man in the neat grey uniform sitting at the passport desk, and the official then turned inquiringly to her. He took one glance at the document she pulled out of a small morocco bag and politely waved her on.

I also caught just a glimpse of it, but a newspaper man is used to making the most of glimpses. It was a passport of the *République Populaire de Roumanie* and a red, semi-diplomatic *passeport de service* at that. Well, well, a Rumanian and a Communist official, or the wife of one. At least the red-tinged hair bobbing in front of me was explained, together with the too-soft English and that faint aura of a circus gipsy.

We ate in a small overflow room next to the main restaurant with less than a dozen tables. We got a good Swiss imitation of a good French meal and, over the *côte de veau chasseur*, we shared a bottle of *Château lafite* which was no imitation at all.

As coffee appeared, the only other eaters—a disorganised tourist family—jumped up and fled from the annex, galvanised into panic by a flight announcement from the loudspeaker on the wall. After they had faded away in a flurry of overnight bags and cameras, it was as if we were sitting in a quiet hotel, alone in a room of our own.

The moment to learn the rest of the riddle had now clearly arrived.

I began by pointing to the now silent loudspeaker above us. "I hate to say this, but in about an hour I shall have to obey that thing too and fly on to Paris. I am staying there for about a month before going back to the States."

"Yes, I see."

She spoke evenly—no questions and no comments, so that the only thing I could do was to press on.

"I suppose it is too much to hope that you are going in that direction as well—I mean if not today then sometime soon. While I am still there, perhaps?"

It couldn't have been more obvious, and I expected the teasing smile to reappear. But, for the first time, the vitality

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seemed to go from her face. She started rolling a bread crumb to and fro on the shiny, starched tablecloth and looked down at it as she spoke.

"It might be, but really I am supposed to be going in the opposite direction. That, as a matter of fact, is where I belong."

It was I who broke the short silence which followed.

"Yes, I noticed that you are a Rumanian."

At that, the little smile did return, though more weakly than before. "My goodness, you are perceptive. Do you happen to know anything about Rumania?"

I told her that about Rumania I knew next to nothing. But then I told her my name and profession and said where else I had been in Eastern Europe at various times in the past few years. I talked of Poland in the tense summer of 1956 and of Hungary in the bloody autumn which followed. I didn't mince any words. I had seen enough of Communists all over the world to pick out the real fanatics, and everything about her suggested just the opposite of a good Party girl. I wanted her to know where I stood; so that it was up to her, if she still felt like going on talking.

Finally, she did go on.

"Well," she said, "like you I am on my way home. In fact, some of my baggage went ahead to Bucharest this morning. That's what I am doing here in Zürich. My husband has been at our Berne Legation since last summer. Cultural affairs—nothing really important. He's not awfully . . . experienced."

There had been a tell-tale hesitation before that last word.

"Meaning presumably—not awfully trusted," I suggested.

She just shrugged her shoulders. But the suggestion was enough. Indeed, it must have helped her over the next part of the conversation for, when I asked whether she was going back for long, she replied flatly and without hesitation, "I imagine for good. We've been recalled without reason."

"Recalled? After only a few months here? I'm beginning to see why your travel plans are undecided."

It was out now. And to anyone who knew how a Communist foreign service worked, there was no need to fill in the details. I wanted to add something a bit more cheerful straightaway, and a forlorn attempt at humour slipped out.

"Perhaps your husband has been made Prime Minister; they are always looking for new ones."

"The telegram didn't mention it. It just gave us firmly, and only fairly politely, seven days to pack up and return."

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"No word as to why—or what next?"

"Nothing, just the recall. That's what I meant up on the hill just now. There are some things—like that telegram—which can be far worse than they look."

The waiters came in to clear the table where the tourist family had been sitting. When they had gone I asked an even stupider question, though she let me off lightly.

"Must you go back?"

"Must is a rather meaningless word, isn't it? Let me put it this way. My husband and one child are here in Switzerland. Our twelve-year-old boy is in Bucharest at school. Mathematically, that makes three reasons for staying and only one for returning. But life isn't as easy as elementary arithmetic."

It was all so unemotional; she talked calmly as if she had made her decision. Yet somehow I sensed that she hadn't.

"And how long have you before you must decide?"

"Until the day after tomorrow. We're expected back on Wednesday by the weekly Aeroflot service via Prague."

As if acting on cue, the Kloten aerodrome loudspeaker circuit jumped to life again from the restaurant wall and reached out for me in loud, anonymous tones.

"Air France announces the arrival of its Flight No. 421 from Cairo to Paris and London."

It was my connection. If it was landing now, that gave us another half hour—forty minutes at the most—before it took off again. Not much time to talk over the decision of a lifetime. To make matters worse, the blue-uniformed crew of a Pan American Clipper in transit appeared that very moment in the annex and settled down noisily at the next table, calling for the menu.

We must both have thought of it; but she said it first.

"If you have time—and I hope you have—let's go back to the hill. I must admit it does help to talk to somebody . . . well, somebody on the outside."

For answer, I smacked a twenty-dollar bill down on the plate, not pausing to think whether it was too much or too little, and steered her out of the restaurant and downstairs through the airport's crowded shopping hall. The man in the grey uniform must have thought I was an eccentric collector of frontier stamps when I presented my passport for exit again. But, in the sacred interests of the Swiss tourist trade, he passed me through without a murmur.

Five minutes later we were once more up by the bushes

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where those lizards had played. That had been less than two hours back, but it seemed like two weeks. There were about thirty minutes to go but they seemed like thirty seconds. As we were climbing the hill, my Caravelle had screamed down over our heads to land like some demented eagle. It had now taxied to a standstill before the reception building, and we could see the movable gangway already wheeled up against its side.

There was no point in making conversation. For one thing we had no time. So I just came out with what I felt.

"You mustn't go back. You simply mustn't. I will help you if you stay, in any way I can. You know you can count on me for that."

"Yes," she replied in that tone of hers which was so matter-of-fact and yet so personal. "I think I could. Which is strange really, isn't it—I mean your being so kind and interested. After all, it's a fairly routine thing to happen in our world, so much so that it's not even news in your world any longer. And we are certainly not important people."

For answer I stared firmly at the top button of her white blouse. It had come undone on the climb.

"I should have thought at least one reason was obvious why I wanted you to stay."

There was an almost gay laugh as she did the button up. "Thank you for that. Flattery does me good at the moment." Then, after a pause, "But that's not all, is it?"

"No, it's not. But it's all I can put clearly into words. The rest is rather vague. I suppose what it amounts to is that your problem is part of a struggle I've also been involved in at times, though only from the sidelines as a writer—an imperialist hack, as your people in Bucharest might say. And I want you to end up on our side—on this side—that's all."

She took my arm and nudged me on to the asphalt path which encircled the hill just below us like a tight black belt. We did two turns, I think, almost in silence.

I know this sounds odd. I should have been pleading with her and arguing eloquently all the time about liberty and democracy. Yet that just wasn't the way it happened. The whole encounter was jerky and vivid as a dream that comes before dawn. There was nothing flowing or rounded-off about it, and yet it was all of a piece—one stark and simple piece of life in this age and day—and that we, both of us, felt and understood.

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It was because of this, I suppose, that neither she nor I broke the last long silence.

As we got back again the second time to the granite column with the podgy eagle on top, the aerodrome loud-speakers opposite reached out for me, in person and in earnest.

The metallic words drifted clearly across, sawing a little on the breeze. "Will Mr. Martin Wright, passenger for Paris, booked on Air France Flight 421, please check in at once at the reception desk. Mr. Martin Wright, please."

She stubbed her cigarette out in the grass and turned to me. She was certainly not crying though her eyes were oddly bright.

"Well, Mr. Martin Wright, that's your plane and whatever I do you must run down and catch it."

I began to stutter something in protest, but she put her hand on my shoulder to cut me off. "If you want to help me, go—and go straightaway."

The urgency drained out of me... It suddenly seemed absurd to be making a fuss with this strange, unhappy and coarsely beautiful creature on the top of the Butzenbuhl. After all, I barely knew her and Paris was but two hours away.

Then shame and desire came flooding back at just about the same speed. I grabbed her and kissed her sideways, half on the mouth, half on the cheek.

"Promise me just this. Let me know what you decide. A line to the paper will reach me anyway."

"Yes, that I can promise. I'll let you know somehow."

She turned her mouth round fully for a second so that our lips met properly. But when I tried to make the most of it she firmly pushed me away.

I plunged down the hill and into the airport building where an almost hysterical clerk at the Air France desk pounced on me and ripped out my ticket. As I watched him dully, it occurred to me that I hadn't even wished her good luck. But that, too, would have sounded silly.

A few minutes later I was strapped in a window seat of the Caravelle screaming up out of Kloten. As we banked to turn northwest, I saw her tiny figure in black and white by the Butzenbuhl monument, standing perfectly still just where I had left her.

She had promised to let me know what she decided and I had said the paper would always find me. So it gave me a cold

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shiver in the stomach to read in its Paris-European edition two days later a small news item from Berne. An agency message said that a well-dressed woman, rumoured to be the wife of a foreign diplomat, had fallen to her death just after dawn from her room on the eighth storey of her hotel.

I put down my glass of Americano on the boulevard café table and worked it out. That would have been the very morning she was due to leave on the Russian plane. That is, if it had been her—for, after all, there are a lot of foreign diplomats in Berne, most of them with wives, and the Swiss police had refused any details. I realised then and there that I would never know the end for certain.

That feeling was bad enough. Yet eventually, I got round to reading the rest of the paper, and I found that my Americano tasted just as good when I started sipping it again. And, somehow, that was even worse.

© Peter Macon 1965

LADY, YOU CAN'T WIN

Lady, lady, never start
Conversation toward your heart;
Keep your pretty words serene;
Never murmur what you mean.
Show yourself, by word and look,
Swift and shallow as a brook.
Be as cool and quick to go
As a drop of April snow;
Be as delicate and gay
As a cherry flower in May...

Lady, lady, never speak
Of the tears that burn your cheek—
She will never win him, whose
Words had shown she feared to lose.
Be you wise and never sad,
You will get your lovely lad.
Never serious be, nor true,
And your wish will come to you—
And if that makes you happy, kid,
You'll be the first it ever did.

DOROTHY PARKER,
The Lady's Reward

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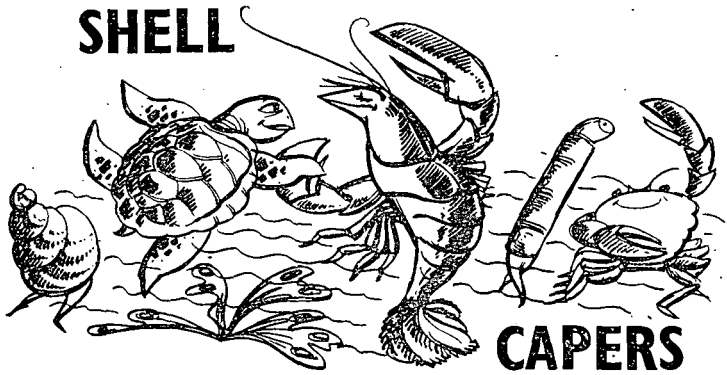

I asked Katsimbalis, before going there, what the Sporades were like.

"Wonderful islands!" was the answer. "Skiathos! Skopelos! Skyros! The lobsters in Skopelos are the best in the world, and the biggest! They're all over the place. Why, you see them walking up and down the streets and sitting down at tables—reading newspapers, playing *tric-trac*, ordering coffees and smoking *narghiles* . . ."

PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR, *Mani*

Crustacean Chase

While roaming o'er the glinting sands, beside the tumbling sea,
I met an ancient fiddler-crab, who made a face at me . . .
And then rehearsed this mournful lay, with loving eloquence:
"Some fifty feet or so from shore, yet, oh! so far from me,
There lives a lady lobster, who is wondrous fair to see;
Her back is most divinely green; her age is only three.
Her claws are tipped with nippers, which she manicures each day;
The flipper of her tail is pink; her feelers green and grey,
She wears them curled in papers, in a most bewitching way.
She dwells beside the outer bar, within a broken weir.
I haven't seen her since the storm that washed her up last year.
She smiled but once, then scuttled back—excuse this scalding tear.
That smile set my crustacean heart with burning love aglow,
I long to seek her in the waves, and yet I dare not go—
Because"—he heaved a weary sigh—"the blue-fish love me so.
But if you waded to the bar, and offered her your toe,
Perhaps my love would come to me . . ."

HENRY B. CULVER, *The Lay of the Lady Lobster*

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To the Point

He was going along the rocks in three-fathom water, watching the pollock catch prawns, and the wrasses nibble barnacles off the rocks, shells and all, when he saw a round cage of green withes; and inside it, looking very much ashamed of himself, sat his friend the lobster, twiddling his horns, instead of thumbs.

"What, have you been naughty, and have they put you in the lock-up?" asked Tom.

The lobster felt a little indignant at such a notion, but he was too much depressed in spirits to argue; so he only said, "I can't get out"...

"Where did you get in?"

"Through that round hole at the top."

"Then why don't you get out through it?"

"Because I can't," and the lobster twiddled his horns more fiercely than ever, but he was forced to confess: "I have jumped upwards, downwards, backwards, and sideways, at least four thousand times; and I can't get out: I always get up underneath there, and can't find the hole"...

"Take your great claws, and break the points off those spikes."

"I never thought of that," said the lobster; "and after all the experience of life that I have had!"

CHARLES KINGSLEY, *The Water Babies*

Making Whoopee

The diver, by observance knows
The oyster's mostly comatose;
No playing leapfrog o'er the bar,
He's prim and rather la-di-da.
The flirty sea-cow, chewing cud,
Can't lure him from the turgid mud.
He has a good address—The Sound—
His stake is firmly in the ground.
Within his shell his love does sit
A gently-nurtured bit of grit:
No wonder he shuns the social whirl
To whoop it up with cultured Pearl!

JOYCE HARRIS

See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!
They are waiting on the shingle—will you come and join the dance?

LEWIS CARROLL

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Imagination can be a fatal disease

THE LITTLE PEOPLE

by John Sibly

DO you mean they actually believe all that?" asked Salisbury.

Yeomans seemed amused. "Of course I do," he said.

Salisbury looked incredulous, and Yeomans put down the pipe he had been filling.

"They believe it far more certainly than you believe the Earth goes round the Sun," he said. "It wouldn't make any difference to you if things were *vice versa*, whereas they act on their beliefs—just call your servant's name at night anywhere in Tanganyika and you'll see." He took up the pipe and pressed down the tobacco with an empty cartridge-case.

Mrs. Adye could contain herself no longer. "But Mr. Yeomans, you don't believe all that, do you now?" she began. Yeomans stopped her with a smile.

"I wouldn't like to say how much of it I believe," he said.

"What! You mean you believe in those wizards you've been telling us all about, who kill people by magic and then somehow keep them alive, and—and shrink them down to the size of a child, and that? I mean it's — it's —" Mrs. Adye couldn't find words to say what it was. Yeomans only smiled sardonically at her over the stem of his pipe.

"And all that about sending them out at night to steal things, and the wizard keeping them in the loft of his hut by day..." went on the voluble matron. Yeomans' apparent belief in such uncivilised performances had clearly dislocated her world. "I mean, how could one of

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those wizards kill you, just by calling out your name in the night?"

"They can't kill you," said Yeomans, "unless you answer them when they call."

"So if you keep your mouth shut you're quite safe, then?" said Mr. Adye, with a guffaw.

"Well, I don't know about that, Jim," said his plump wife, "I always like you to answer if I call out at night."

"I shan't be so keen to answer you after this, though, shall I?" he replied, with another chuckle.

"Why, Jim, sometimes you answer in your sleep, I'm sure. At any rate you go to sleep right after—I know that.

Yeomans smiled reticently. Clearly he was pleased. The lean, brown man, who is strongly silent about his adventures in Africa, except when he condescends to "spin a yarn" and hold his hearers enthralled for an hour or so, does not enjoy the dominance he had once. But Yeomans was plainly dominating the company.

"What happens if you answer the wizard, exactly?" Salisbury asked him.

"You must understand the wizard dresses up in full costume—horns on his head, mask, and so on. Then he performs his rites, looking into a bowl of water; the reflection of the person he has willed to injure appears in the water. He calls the man's name, and then, if the reflection seems to answer him, fires an arrow into it. If the man has indeed answered, the water is tinged with blood, showing the wound is fatal."

"And then what?" asked Mrs. Adye.

"It varies. Sometimes the man sickens and dies. Sometimes he just disappears. Later, someone comes across his simulacrum scuttling among the huts, perhaps with a bag of stolen corn on its shoulder. If you are silly enough to hit one of them, it bursts and leaves a couple of pounds of mealie-flour spilt where it had been. But it isn't advisable to hit one."

"And where does the wizard keep his pets, then?" asked Mr. Adye. "Up in the attic, like you said?"

"Usually. Visitors can sometimes hear them chirping up there in the dark, like bats."

"Suppose they aren't bats, then, by any chance?" said Adye.

His wife said, "Ugh!"

"A cheap form of labour," remarked Salisbury.

Only the Rector, who had been a missionary, said nothing.

"Well, not so cheap as that." Clearly, Yeomans took Salisbury more seriously than the other speakers. "He has

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to feed them—if not well enough treated, they have been known to go on strike."

"Just like home, eh?" said Adye.

"There are even said to have been cases where a wizard has lost control—some disturbance to his ritual, perhaps—and his charges have murdered him. Afterwards, they've migrated to some lonely spot where you can see them dancing on moonlit nights."

"Well, well," said Adye, "fairies, eh?"

"Pygmies perhaps," suggested Salisbury.

"Perhaps," Yeomans said.

Mr. Adye looked at his watch. "Well, Mrs. Adye, we should be shifting," he said. He turned to their host. "Bye-bye, Mr. Yeomans, and thanks for the invite."

"Thank you for all your thrilling stories," said his spouse. "We shan't sleep tonight, shall we, Jim?"

The Rector and Salisbury also rose and took their leave. Yeomans accompanied them to the stone-pillared porch, and watched the Adyes' Bentley slide away, Mrs. Adye's plump hand fluttering goodbye.

The Rector got on to his bicycle. "I hope very much to see you on Sunday," he said, looking directly at Yeomans with the blue eyes set in his old, nut-wrinkled face.

Yeomans merely said, "Goodnight, Rector," and lit his pipe.

"You've really spoilt Mrs. Adye's sleep tonight," said Salisbury. "You've no idea how nervous she is."

"Ah. You've been here longer than I," said Yeomans.

"I hope you'll look in on me soon," Salisbury replied.

"I've no doubt I shall."

"Goodnight."

As Salisbury's estate-car bore him back to his farm, he obtained a last view from the road of Yeomans smoking his pipe in the modest Georgian porch of The Mullins. Plainly, Yeomans was well off. The Mullins was an expensive house, and obviously very well run, though with an apparent minimum of servants. The garden, too, rather out of hand when the last owner died, was tidy and trim after a remarkably short time. Salisbury, whose family had farmed in the district for generations, was pleased because Yeomans hadn't gone in for the expensive, ostentatious painting and decorating, the electrified street-lanterns on projecting brackets, the grilles of sham-Spanish, welded ironwork, the hanging plants and concrete edgings, the new garages with aluminium doors,

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which had made the Adye home, once a decent old house, indistinguishable from something in a "high-class" suburb. The Mullins still looked like the house of a gentleman.

Service was poorly attended on Thursday evenings, and it was not unusual for the Rector to read Evening Prayer to one or two hats, scarcely visible in the dim lamplight above the tops of the pews in which their wearers knelt. He was not surprised, accordingly, to find himself alone, intoning into the dusky spaces and great, echoing waggon-roof. Even had the church been empty to begin with he would have gone on, with the assistance of the organist, but he had distinctly seen two figures in the pews as he entered from the vestry. Nonetheless, when he intoned, "O Lord, open thou our lips," no-one replied, "And our mouth shall show forth thy praise."

Yet it was not till after the *Magnificat* he became aware of anything odd. Then he discovered something was moving among the pews at the back, never rising above the level of the woodwork, yet getting somehow—with a good deal of noise and scrabbling—from one pew to another. All the time he was reading the Second Lesson it continued, and when the *Nunc Dimittis* came, the Rector realised consciously what had been obscurely troubling him all the time. In moving from one pew to the next, the creature, whatever it was, not aimlessly but evidently with intent, was working up towards the chancel.

It was with a little shiver of uneasiness that, despite his efforts to drive the disturbance from his thoughts, he turned his back upon it to recite the Creed. But he did drive it from his mind, and it was only as he turned for the responses that he caught a glimpse of something flitting across the aisle to the pulpit side. It reminded him of the old game of Grandmother's Footsteps—if you were caught moving you had to go back to the beginning. Only this didn't go back.

He lowered his head for the Lord's Prayer; then, with the next responses, a scuttle close at hand told him whatever it was had reached the pew nearest his stall. The Rector's voice soared, unaccompanied, into the dark echoing cells of the roof; in the silence after each versicle he felt sure something was bobbing up, like a puppet in Punch and Judy, and dropping down again as he began to intone.

As he turned to the Collects it started working its way, to judge from the scratching, to the end of the pew, as though to rush out and jump upon him. He turned, accordingly, on

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reaching the Third Collect; his voice, as so often in the African darkness around his lonely mission station, rang out in appeal for protection against the perils and dangers of the night. At once something darted out of the far end of the pew, pattered in a flash down the south aisle, and was out of the door before he could catch a glimpse of it. The service was not further disturbed.

"Was there a dog in church?" he asked the organist, as he was disrobing afterwards.

"Dog, Rector? I don't think so. I didn't see anything."

"I didn't *see* anything," the Rector said. "Not distinctly, that is. Will you help me make sure everything is all right?"

But the organist was expected home, so the Rector took his bicycle-lamp and searched carefully between the pews, alone. As he expected, he found nothing. When he had put out the lights he fitted the lamp back on the bicycle and started to pedal away.

He had hardly left the churchyard before it was there—whatever it was—scuttling before the bicycle at a queer stooping run, now and then diverging from the straight, as a rabbit will, but always, like a rabbit or a hen, keeping on the road; and always keeping, do what the Rector would, just out of the golden oval thrown by his lamp. Soon he was approaching the rectory—would it turn into the gate ahead of him, he wondered?

But just then headlights blazed round the sharp corner by the white gate; they dipped for him at once, and in their glare he glimpsed a little black manikin scuttling straight for the offside wheel of the car. One thought filled his mind—it's blinded—as he raised his voice in a useless shout. In a moment the car rushed by, and the Rector dismounted to begin yet another search with his lamp. There was no sign of any crushed carcass.

"Must have gone between the wheels," he muttered, as he turned into the drive which led to the gloomy bulk of his house . . .

It was eleven o'clock on a pleasant, September morning when he answered the rectory doorbell to find Salisbury on the step.

"Come into the study," the Rector said. "Glad to see you again so soon."

Salisbury said, "I saw you last night. Outside the rectory gate."

"Ah! So it was your car I met." The Rector looked at

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Salisbury, with the clear blue eyes that were unexpected in the weatherbeaten face.

"Yes," said Salisbury. He paused; the Rector waited. "After I'd gone by, I got the impression you tried to tell me something," he went on.

"Yes?" said the Rector.

"I was nearly home then, so I thought I'd call this morning, rather than turn back." He stopped again, as if doubtful whether or not to continue.

"Anything else?" asked the Rector.

"Yes. Just as I passed you I was bothered whether I'd burst a tyre. There was a sort of pop, and a slight blow against the front wheel. But nothing happened, so I just had a look at it when I put it away in the coach-house." He paused again a little; then he said, "The wheel was covered with white dust."

"Dust?"

"Yes—white as chalk. It isn't there now because I didn't like it somehow and swilled it off this morning in the stable-yard."

"Well?"

"There's a patch of it on the road outside your gate, though, Rector," said Salisbury. "I had a look before I turned in here." He pulled out a test-tube such as might have contained some specimen for the vet, and shook the white grains on to a spatula. Then he held a match beneath it and watched while the dust browned and blackened. A faint but definite smell of burnt toast came to both men's nostrils.

"Flour," said Salisbury. There was a silence in the study.

"I think in the circumstances," said the Rector at length, going to a cupboard in one corner of the room, "sherry is justified—even at this hour of the morning."

Salisbury raised the glass he had been given, sipped the golden liquid, and put it down. He looked hard and long at his companion.

"Were you called in the night, Rector?" he asked.

The clergyman returned his gaze. "Troubled, yes—until I met your car. But called, no." He took another sip of his sherry, and looked at Salisbury again. "Were you?" he asked.

Salisbury nodded. "About three a.m., I heard the church clock just afterwards." He finished his sherry. "What was so upsetting was that my father called me... He's been dead six years, you know," he said, as the Rector did not reply.

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The Rector too finished his wine, "I do know," he said; "I was with him at the end."

"Of course you were."

"Your father is at peace," said the Rector. There was another silence.

"Easy to say it's imagination, but do you believe in . . . in what we heard the other night about those Africans, and the way they died?" Salisbury asked at last.

"I've known Africans die in very strange ways," the Rector replied, "especially if they thought they had been bewitched."

"But surely that's all imagination?"

"Of course it's imagination," said the Rector. "They die of their imagination. It can be a fatal disease."

"You've known cases?"

"Faith can remove mountains," the Rector answered. "It can easily kill a man—if he has faith in the wrong things."

"Of course I didn't answer, after what we'd heard," said Salisbury hurriedly.

"No," said the Rector.

"What worries me, though, is if it calls again, and this time I do."

"You have faith in it already," the Rector said.

"But you talked as if you believed in it yourself."

"I have had evidence that such things occur. I don't put my faith in them. I *know*, even if I answered such a voice, it would have no power unless I gave it the power."

Salisbury looked greatly relieved. "What I can't understand," he said, as they stood at the door a minute later, "is why we should have been told, if we were wanted to answer."

"I've already explained," said the Rector. "Africans who die of witchcraft—of pure witchcraft, I mean, without the addition of poison—die because they expect they will do so. It's no good hoping an Englishman will do the same, is it, unless he knows what's expected of him?"

"No," said Salisbury, as he left to go to his car.

The Rector returned to his study. He was obliging the secretary of the local pack—who found the South of France, this year, more attractive than the cubbing—by handling his correspondence for a week or two. Lately, there had been a sudden crop of claims on the poultry fund, larger even than the presence of cubs would make probable. Today, there were two still more awkward letters—claims from farmers for sheep-worrying: one farmer believed a fox was responsible for the death of two of this year's lambs, while another

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thought a hound puppy had torn out the throat of his dead ewe. The telephone rang, and the Rector put the letters thoughtfully aside.

In a vague way, he was prepared for what he heard when he lifted the instrument. Mrs. Adye was almost incoherent with distress.

"Rector, please come at once... Yes, Jim... can't think how it happened... Yes, in the Bentley—right under a lorry on the Birmingham road... always so careful, even if it was a fast car... lorry driver said he didn't think his mind could have been on the road."

The Rector was almost too preoccupied to afford Mrs. Adye his professional consolations as the taxi brought them back from the hospital, late that afternoon.

Adye's last words had been, "It's all my own fault, Rector; I answered it."

It was two or three days before Salisbury was called again—once more in the heart of the night. This time the voice was that of his mother, dead twenty years; it came to him in a dream of her, and he woke with the continuing impression of the sound. The silence of the small hours, with their absolute, tomb-black darkness, pressed on his eardrums—silence so intense as to seem audible. And then again he heard the voice, plain, and distinct, and seeming to come from the garden as it had done in his dream, when he had been once more a boy, hiding in the bedroom from afternoon visitors. The effort to prevent himself answering was a physical exertion. And then, heavy and as though close at hand, fell the three iron strokes of the clock.

It is all right, thought Salisbury, I have not answered. Three o'clock had struck; after three o'clock the voice would not recur. And then came the insistent doubt: Did I answer it while I was still asleep?

Adye had been in the habit of answering his wife in his sleep; and Salisbury had attended his funeral that afternoon. He had indeed driven the Rector back from the crematorium; neither had spoken much. And now Salisbury had been called a second time. He could not deny he had thought, after Adye's accident, he himself had escaped. And what if he was wrong in supposing that the danger ceased at three a.m.? What if he fell asleep again, and should again be called? He lay awake, not daring to close an eye, while the dark hours ebbed slowly towards morning...

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At the same time of night, two days later, the Rector was walking on Notwood Hill in some distress of mind. The Head of the church school had been to see him that evening about the problem of four mothers who were threatening to keep their children away from classes unless the education officer would provide them with a taxi.

"Of course he won't provide a taxi—it's less than a mile," the headmaster had concluded.

"But they're the Notfield people," the Rector had replied; "those four houses on the old packhorse way under the hill. The children can walk it in twenty minutes down the green track. At this time of year anyway. Why should they want a taxi to go four miles round by the main road?"

"The women say they don't like the packhorse road."

"Do you mean someone has been annoying the children?"

"They wouldn't tell," replied the headmaster. He had plainly come to ask the Rector for help rather than advice.

Promising to do what he could, the Rector had shown him out, taken his own hat and stick, and set off along the green lane for Notfield.

When he arrived there he met with a confused and tumultuous story from the four women.

The Rector had always taken care his parishioners should not identify him with authority: there remained deeper fears to overcome, however, before the old secrets of the countryside could be laid before a priest. But they were overcome, and he learned what he had earlier divined from casual hints: Notwood had been from ancient times a reputed haunt of the Little People. The Rector's etymological brain leapt at once to Pugpit, a dark hollow halfway along the track, which he had always supposed to be the pit of Puck. Now these old legends of malevolence were being alarmingly revived, with grotesque additions from the television age. The children thought they were being followed on the way home when afternoon school was over.

"Like Bill and Ben, the Flowerpot Men, my Jim says it is," Mrs. Baines told him.

"And with the daylight-saving nearly ended, we don't like them coming home alone," another put in, "and you can't always be there yourself, can you?"

The Rector had promised to intercede with the education office, and had walked home through the dark silence of Pugpit. Nothing troubled him there, but when he reached the rectory there was an angry farmer who had lost five sheep, and a

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message from Salisbury saying he had something to tell him when they met...

Unable to drop off, even in the small hours, the Rector had at length taken a stick and a torch and had climbed to the summit of the little hill. His feet knew the slope so well, the torch was quite unnecessary. It was his usual walk when sleep withheld itself. No conscious choice directed his path. Yet was it chance that placed him directly above the garden fence of The Mullins, he wondered, as the three strokes from his own church tower plucked the night air?

He had been surprised, on crossing the top of the hill, to see a window faintly lit; more surprised, on approaching the fence, to see it was a ground-floor window. And then he saw something that made him grip his stick.

Between the light and the window moved, huge, black, the form of that Enemy all clergy are enlisted to fight—tall, immensely tall, and towering at the head into two enormous black horns. And then another shadow was blocking the glare now streaming from the window; was blotting out the huge figure, except the crowning horns themselves: there were noises, cries, a crashing explosion which echoed round the silent slopes of Notwood. The Rector was over the fence and up to the window in a moment.

He ran there against the barrel of a twelve-bore gun, as a harsh voice shouted, "Stand back!"

"Salisbury!" exclaimed the Rector.

Salisbury's story, when they were sitting in the study at the rectory half an hour later, was brief.

"Of course it *might* have been my imagination, those voices in the night..." he began, when he had started a second glass of the Rector's sherry.

"It was your imagination."

"Yes, but it might have been *only* my imagination. I kept telling myself that. But then the Coroner rang up this evening. And then I knew."

"Knew what?"

"The Coroner wanted me to get you. He'd seen from the records you conducted the service for poor Jim Adye, and rang you here. But you weren't in, and he couldn't leave a message with Mrs. Woodhouse, so he got on to me."

"Oh."

"The Superintendent at the crematorium had been to him to say the men weren't happy about the ashes they'd raked

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out and put in an urn in the columbarium as Jim Adye's. So he and another doctor had taken a look at them."

"Yes?"

"There was no trace of human remains at all. Apparently—" Salisbury paused and drank some more sherry —"you read the Burial Service over a box full of firewood."

The Rector said nothing.

"I'm afraid I was so taken up with my own concerns I didn't come round to pass the message on to you later. You see, I *knew* he'd got hold of poor old Adye for some end of his own. And I knew he wanted me—what would be left of me—for the same end. He called me last night, again, so I knew I couldn't have answered him before."

"And you didn't answer him yesterday?"

"No. So I felt sure he'd call me again tonight."

"Well?"

"Then, it came into my head—why shouldn't I answer him? I wish now I'd asked you about it first. But I was so angry at everything I just took the old Purdey and a couple of number four cartridges, and strolled over to The Mullins about half-past two. Well, there was a light on in that empty room downstairs, so I watched from the shrubbery, because I felt sure Yeomans would come into it. And he did—at least that thing with the horns came in—it gave me a fit, nearly, till I saw it must be him, in some terrifying witch-doctor get-up of his."

"And then?"

"Then I sneaked up to the window, and there he was, muttering and doing things with his hands—there was a fire, and a basin of water on the floor. Suddenly he threw something on the fire, which blazed up, and called out my name loudly, in a voice that wasn't his. So I pushed open the french window, walked up and looked over his shoulder so that my reflection came in the water, and said, 'Hullo, Yeomans, did you call?'

"Well, he'd grabbed a little bow and arrow he had, before he saw anything had gone wrong; then, he saw it wasn't working out and he swung round. I've never seen anything like the fearful mask of hate he turned on me. He tried to pull my gun from under my arm—the choke barrel went off and the shot flew into the basin and smashed his reflection in the water. Then he seemed to see someone over my shoulder—"

"Me," said the Rector.

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"Yes—he must have thought there were a lot of us. He bolted out of the room, all his devil-doctor robes flying; and you know the rest."

"Yes," said the Rector. He looked at his watch. "Bed now, I think. Would you like to stay?"

"If you please."

"You can have the spare room. I must be up at the usual time; I expect the Coroner will be on the phone in the morning."

But it was the County Police who were on the phone in the morning. The milkman (it was his day for orders) could get no answer at The Mullins; no more could the postman with a registered letter; no more could the gardener calling for his instructions.

The last had felt something wrong, had gone to the village constable—did the Rector know if Mr. Yeomans had been going away?

"Can't the servants tell you anything?" asked the Rector.

"We've made inquiries. Mr. Yeomans has never had any indoor servants at The Mullins."

"Oh," said the Rector. As an afterthought he added, "I'll come round."

By the time he and Salisbury got there the house had been entered, and Yeomans had been found at the foot of the stairs in his ordinary clothes, but with his head twisted round so that it looked over his shoulder.

"Fallen downstairs in the dark," said the Inspector.

Nobody else spoke. But suddenly, "Oh, Officer, can I do anything? They told *me*... such a shock... just like poor Jim. I came at once—" Mrs. Adye, plump in her black costume, had appeared in the doorway.

"Keep that woman out of here!" shouted Salisbury, as the little footsteps pattered down the stairs from the attic. A big policeman turned to do so and fortunately blocked the doorway as the line of little black creatures scuttled by Salisbury and the Rector and scampered through the kitchen and the scullery to freedom.

"What was that? Rats?" snapped the Inspector.

Salisbury said nothing. Only he and the old clergyman had recognised in the-white-last of the manikins which had fled by them—scarcely two feet high—a perfected miniature of the lamented Jim Adye.

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MIDNIGHT CALL

by B. TRAVEN

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ONE certain night there was a hard knock on the light wooden wall of the weather-beaten bungalow in which I lived. I had no watch, but from the position of the moon I judged that it was about midnight. It happened in a village populated by Indian peasants and which was known in the whole region as a *nido de bandoleros*, or as we would say, a nest of bandits.

Those were revolutionary times: scores of small, semi-military groups, who had lost contact with their regiments and whose little properties had been devastated, had to keep alive with their families as best as they could.

Fact is—and I ought to know—that one can live securely in the countryside of the Republic in the very midst of so-called bandits, if one is neither Indian nor Mestizo and does not care what the people there are doing or how they make their living. In addition I had learned from experience that one can live peacefully and happily in such a neighbourhood if every inhabitant of the place knows that one owns only one pair of shoes with holes, a few worn shirts and one pair of pants which does no longer serve even to repair another pair of ragged pants . . .

The people of said village—*bandoleros* or no *bandoleros*, what did I care—would not let me starve. After I had lost my beautiful cotton—because of the boll weevil—so that all the proceeds of my nine long months of hard work were wasted, I stared at the world . . . discouraged and utterly dejected. Yet no sooner had I asked myself, what shall I eat, what shall I drink, to whom shall I turn now, than two men of the village appeared at my bungalow with an expressed desire to learn English and asked how much I would charge. I told them twenty *centavos* each for one lesson. They paid me ten hours in advance and so I was able to buy corn seed to plant in my ruined cotton field. It was just the right time to plant corn because the rainy season was to start in less than four weeks.

Through those two pupils I got five more within two weeks because for some reason not clear to me at the time, several villagers had suddenly decided to study English. They all came regularly and paid for their lessons punctually. So all of us were satisfied with one another. Under such conditions I had no reason to bother about whether they were *bandoleros* or not. They let me live undisturbed and I left them alone. No better way to live on this earth.

Now if someone in the countryside in the Republic knocks

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on your door around midnight, experience, advice, good taste and fine manners demand that you keep quiet, that you don't answer and that you hold your breath as long as possible, because it might just so happen at the very moment you open the door, to see who is there—and you wishing it might be the telegraph boy bringing you a hundred dollar order—you have two or a dozen shots fired at you and you withdraw safe and unharmed or filled with lead, alone or followed by some men who are pushing farther inside and not exactly in a friendly way.

There are people who don't know better and who will claim that bravery is a great virtue on the battlefield, but bravery in certain places at certain times and in certain circumstances in the Republic is usually a sign of incurable and innate stupidity. No-one around there is expected to be a juggler and catch revolver bullets with his teeth. To see that done, you go to a circus.

Since many years have elapsed since I travelled with a circus, I have, as is only natural, lost the ability to catch bullets with my hands open—or with my eyes closed—so when I heard the knocking on my door, I kept as quiet as a buried chest full of money. Whether I began to tremble, or broke out in a cold sweat, I no longer remember, but I don't believe I did. If things have already gone so far that you hear a violent knocking on your door at night and that the knocking gets more vehement every second, it will no longer be of any use to sweat from fear. Whatever is going to happen, whatever it may be, has already been decided—and without consulting you—and so you'd better save the cold sweat.

After several more of these violent knocks, I heard half-loud voices. There were at least three men as far as I could distinguish from the different voices. The voices carried a strong and merciless tone as of men who knew precisely why they had come and what they wanted.

Then I heard them shuffle close to the door and I could catch their heavy steps on the sandy ground. From the sounds their feet made, I gathered that two of them were wearing boots and one huaraches. I realised that my life was prolonged by the number of steps they needed to reach the door.

Naturally I thought of escaping. The one-room bungalow had two doors, one at each side. But I had barricaded both doors with beams. The loosening of these beams could not

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be done without noise and, with the least little noise I made, the men would immediately be at the door through which I wanted to escape.

I had no gun. Anyway, a gun would not have helped me in such a situation as I was in. One might be lucky and shoot all three men. But it would be much more difficult to get out of a village in which one has shot three of its citizens and particularly get away intact when the place is a hideout of *bandoleros*. Actually I was better off without a gun. What's more, it eliminated my supposed obligation to be brave. Always and everywhere, bravery is badly rewarded . . .

By now the men had reached the door. Because of the annual heavy tropical rains, the bungalow was built on posts and several steps led up to the doors.

I heard the men stamping up and, as the steps were narrow, only one could be at the door. The others would have to remain on the lower steps. The fellow at the door knocked hard with what seemed to be the butt of a revolver or shotgun.

When the knocking had no effect he yelled, "Hey, *hombre —abre—levantate!* we got the goddam hell to talk to you."

That proved they knew perfectly well that I was in the house, for otherwise they wouldn't have called.

Stubbornly they continued knocking and calling. But I didn't move a lip, that is, not voluntarily, for my lips quivered all right. Whose wouldn't?

Now they talked again to one another. Then they stamped down the stair and shuffled over the sand which gnashed in response. I thought that at least they were convinced that I was not at home. My mistake. Miscalculating things mostly happens when one wants to believe something to be of some benefit to oneself.

For half a minute or so they walked about as though not knowing what to do now, and then stopped exactly at that part of the wall against which the cot on which I slept was set up. They knocked on this wall with full force and continued to call, "*Abre, señor, abre!*"

Now I realised that among them must be one who knew the inside of my bungalow very well; otherwise he would not have known where I slept. I was cornered and had to admit that I was in.

I got up, prepared to look cold death in the face without moving an eyelash. It would not be a glorious death with

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no-one to take notice of the sneering and cold laugh with which I accepted, even welcomed, death, because there was no newspaperman present to tell posterity how bravely and nobly I had behaved the last hour of my life. *Bandoleros* don't care much whether or not one trembles and shakes from cold fear... It is business, sober and plain business, not a bit sophisticated as some other business.

Although they obviously had expected me to jump up quickly, I did not move. Every minute I gained was wrested from old man death. So I said sleepily, "Hey, you out there, what's the matter? You goddam muledriver, stinky *arrieros*, can't an honest man sleep one single night in this here godforsaken burg of whores, thieves, violators of decent womenfolk? What kind of a drunken lousy pack of *cabrones* is there shuffling at my door? Not a single stinking goddam drop of tequila have I got here in my house. To hell with you, you filthy worm-eaten dogs. Hear me! I want to sleep!"

I got talking louder and louder, on purpose trying to get as angry and beastly furious as I possibly could, for if these had to be my last words on earth I wanted them to be added to my last prayer so that eternity should be less boring.

Anyhow, by now it had become obvious those fellows out there wanted very much to get me up. But for what reason I could not even guess.

When they heard me answer, their harsh tone changed immediately into a very mild one. Perhaps they had imagined until now that I was not at home and that they would have to leave unsuccessfully.

One of them spoke up, "Please, *señor, por favor*, come to the door just for a moment. We got to talk to you very urgently. It's a serious matter." There was a tone of pleading in his voice. Almost pitiful.

Indios and medium-Indios have no conception of time. When their heart is full of sorrow they will come to you at any time be it day or night. In this particular case it might, of course, have been a trick to lure me to the door so whatever they had in mind doing would be easier to accomplish. But no matter what was in store for me, I had to open the door at last. They could have broken in, anyway, had that been their intention.

"Hullo there, *senores*!" I said sleepily, leaning against the open door. "Welcome, *bien venidos, amigos*. What can I do for you on such a night of romantic love?"

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In the meantime the moon had come out. I could see them very clearly, though I did not recognise one of their faces, shadowed by big palm hats. They were robust types, without coats, clad only in white pants and white, very clean, cotton shirts, open at the neck. One wore—as far as I could make out in the semi-darkness of the night—leather leggings and yellow boots with high heels, which were completely run down. The other wore brown leather boots which were torn at many places. The third wore—as I had concluded before by hearing his light step—huaraches. The two men with boots on each carried a rifle of the kind used by the army and which they held ready to shoot. Of these two, one had besides a revolver stuck into a shabby holster. Both wore belts adorned with a full row of cartridges. The man with huaraches on his feet had for his whole armament only an ordinary machete.

It was this man with the machete who seemed to know me. I thought that I had seen him several times around the village. The other two were complete strangers to me.

Instinct told me that the man with the machete had peaceful intentions towards me, and that the other two were not after my riches or my life, but needed help instead.

The one holding a machete said, "Would you be so very kind, *señor*, as to come to our house? My nephew is lying there sick. I don't know what ails him; they brought him in awfully sick. He won't wake up. He will not come to. So we ask you, very much, please, go with us. Perhaps you can help him. We're sure you can. We know you're a very wise man, in fact a great doctor."

"What's the matter with him?" I asked.

"That's exactly what we don't know and why we ask you so much, please, do come and see what's the matter with him."

The nearest doctor lived about forty miles away. The round trip on horseback would take him three days at least and he would charge no less than one hundred pesos, a sum that had to be put on the table before he would even saddle the horse. Who of these villagers—to whom one hundred pesos was a fortune—could pay such a sum? No doctor comes without previous payment. He, the medico, is primarily a business man. No mistake about that. In this world in which he lives he has to be a business man. No-one will give him credit for his rent... He who cannot pay has no right to live, he must die or try to live without a medico. That is the reason why most people of the Republic stay alive for more than ninety years unless someone shoots them.

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In my possession I had an old cardboard case in which, once upon a time, shoes had been packed. This cardboard affair served me as my medicine chest. It contained some medicine, if you can call a few aspirin tablets medicine. But besides medicine there were sewing implements, trouser buttons, a torn typewriter ribbon, a few used razor blades, an empty tube of toothpaste, one big fishhook, two small fishhooks, five newspaper clippings, a pocket knife with one blade broken, the other small blade rusty but otherwise in good shape, strings in different thicknesses, four different screws, a few nails, a pencil stub, a leaking fountain pen, the tooth of a donkey, the tail of a rattler and some things I no longer remember.

During my early youth I carried all my earthly goods in my pants and coat pockets—when I had a coat—because I had to be ready to travel any hour no matter where I happened to be, mostly on account of merciless truant officers. Since then, having become well-to-do, I carried all my earthly riches in that shaky cardboard box. Something like that makes you wonderfully independent.

Even had these good men not asked for it, even had they not so highly solicited my medical knowledge, I would still have taken the medicine box along with me. This I did entirely instinctively and out of long and often very bitter experience. For it had happened that, when I thought I was leaving my present residence for only one hour, upon regaining full consciousness I discovered I had landed on a different continent. Through such experiences one learns to become careful, so that toothbrush, shaving kit and a little pocket compass were constantly buttoned up inside my back pants-pocket.

How would I know where I might land if I flew away with these three nightbirds?

"Is this your doctor box?" asked one of them.

"*Si, señor,* this is my medicine box," I confirmed, and the men murmured something which sounded like satisfaction.

"Then let's go," said another one.

I bolted my door and off we went.

Quite naturally I had not the slightest idea of where we were going. Nothing was said about that. After all it was useless for me to ask such a question, for if we were marching to Honduras or to Sinaloa, it was not up to me to decide. Whether I liked it or not, this was determined by those who carried guns. He who carries a gun always has the right to give orders, and the one who has no gun always has the damn

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duty to obey. And that has been the law since that memorable day when the archangel Gabriel with his flaming sword in hand chased two naked people out of the Lord's vegetable garden. Had they had a machine-gun, everything would have turned out entirely different and giving orders and obeying them would have taken a different road. It was for that difference that anyone will understand why I wandered along with these three men through the night without complaint, without one word to ask where we were going and for what reason.

We did not trudge through the centre of the village, but kept along the periphery instead. On all sides dogs barked furiously. And those dogs which did not see us barked themselves hoarse so as not to make the impression they had not noticed us and so leave the pleasure of barking exclusively to the other dogs. Sure enough there was a hellish noise in the whole village. Because of that horrible barking most of the roosters woke up and began crowing lustily to be joined by the sad braying of lonely donkeys. Not a single living soul came out of his hut to see what was going on. Once these village dogs start barking they will stay noisy through half the night whether there is a gang of bandits sneaking around or a mule wandering sleepily along the road . . .

We left the village behind and marched a fairly long time through underbrush, then for a while through bushland and finally we reached a frame house. It had a well-kept, fenced-in flower garden in front, and on both sides there were vegetable patches which I could distinguish clearly in the moonlight. The house was not decrepit or covered with rags and reed mats like most of the homes in the village. From the outside it made a good impression. On the porch were innumerable plants and flowers in pots and cans and pails, so-called *macetas*.

The good impression I had received from the outside was increased when I entered the living room. Neither in this village nor in the whole region had I ever seen such a clean and well-furnished house.

The beds were of white lacquered iron. There were real chairs and even some rocking chairs. Large framed pictures adorned the wall—Lohengrin with his Elsa sitting on the bed; Othello holding forth speeches about his adventures in foreign lands; the march of the hero Hidalgo leaving the town of Dolores surrounded by Indian peasants swinging machetes; the Virgin of Guadalupe and a group of small and enlarged

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photographs of uncles, aunts, grandfathers, children carrying communion candles, obviously all members of one great family. One could not think of a more respectable and honourable family than that living in this house. People who kept such a house, and in such order and cleanliness, could only be citizens who fortified and preserved the pillars of the State and at the same time the columns of the only church which guarantees you a seat in heaven.

But a life full of experience teaches you not to take anything at its face value. There are beautiful plants in the Republic which tempt a man to look closer, but if he only touches them or brushes against them with the naked arm he gets a rash which takes months before it can be cured, if at all.

In spite of being at that moment in this respectable-looking house, I did not forget for one minute that three men had brought me there, and that these three men were armed. Neither did I allow my face to express wonderment about the house and the fact that the appearance of the men was in sharp contrast to it. I accepted everything as if it could not have been otherwise. I looked with great interest at the pictures on the walls and, so as to make these people believe that I admired the pictures, I said, "Very fine paintings, made by great artists."

But while I said this, I looked sideways at everything in view. The windows were well barricaded and covered. No ray of light could escape out into the night. Little hope there was to escape through one of these windows if it should become necessary. Two doors led into two other rooms. Both the men with guns seated themselves near the entrance door in such a way that nobody could enter or leave without being carefully scrutinised by them. Putting the guns between their knees, they rolled themselves cigarettes.

"Sit down, *señor, por favor*," said one of them and motioned me with a nod to an empty chair. I sat down and again looked around. The floor was covered with thick *petate* mats, fresh and yellow. Where the floor showed I could see that it was scrubbed clean like freshly-washed linen. In the farthest corner, in a sort of niche, there was a picture of *La Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro* with a small candle burning in front of it. Placed around it there were rosaries and cheap pictures of a dozen or so saints. On the table covered with a multi-coloured cotton cloth, there stood a lighted kerosene lamp.

I had not seen such a lamp for at least fourteen months; nobody in the village had one, nor had I. It was this kerosene

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lamp which had given me the first impression on entering that I was in a house of honest well-off people. On the table there was also a glass bowl of the kind one can win for ten *centavos* at a fair by throwing balls at objects until they are hit and fall.

When we entered the house the fellow with the machete immediately stepped into another room, closing the door tightly behind him. Since the walls were of rather thin wood I heard, now and then, voices in an undertone emanating from that room.

After a while the man came back with a glass and a bottle.

"First let's have one," he said, and filled the glass.

"*Salud!*" I said, and shot it down. It made me feel warm and I thought to myself that where such good tequila is offered there certainly would not be murder at the back of it. No-one wastes such good *Anejo* on someone he wants to get rid of.

The two at the main door remained where they were sitting. Suddenly I had the impression that these men were not watching me to prevent my escape but rather sat armed so close to the door to protect the people in the house against possible harm coming from the outside. Of this I became even more convinced when the two whispered to each other and one left to sit on the stoop outside, while the other took up a position inside in such a way that he could not be seen immediately by someone entering but could cover the intruder with his gun.

The glass was filled again. I was offered and accepted another drink while no-one else got a second helping. Closing the bottle the man said, "Now, let's get down to business." He rose and motioned me to follow him.

We entered that other room where a very small lamp gave little light. The man returned to the main room, picked up the kerosene lamp and brought it in. Now I could see more clearly. Two women were sitting in rocking chairs, their *rebozos* wrapped around their heads and necks. Both were Indians, cleanly dressed and in their speech and bearing not different from any woman of a ranch owner. One of them was comparatively young, about thirty or so and, as I learned later she was the wife of the man with the machete. The other was older and could well have been the mother of either the man or his wife. Obviously the room was the bedroom of the couple. Judging from the two beds in the main room, several persons seemed to live in the house.

Both women got up and greeted me courteously. They shook my hands lightly and sat down again. A young man

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was lying on a mat, covered up to his chin with a cotton blanket. His face was pale but full and I concluded that he could not have been sick very long but had probably been seriously injured. He did not move and appeared as if dead.

"This is the boy I told you about," said the man, as he put the kerosene lamp on a chair nearby.

"I'm sure you can help the boy," the young woman said. "He's my nephew and we don't want him to die. Since our own son lost his life in some silly shooting, this one has been like our own. We would really be very grateful if you could do something so he won't die. He's the last young one of the family left. All the others have been shot or stabbed to death at election time, even though none of them wanted a job for themselves. They just got mixed up for the sake of others." The woman did not cry but spoke with touching emotion while the older woman now and then sighed.

The election fights took place in the city of the district to which men and women, young and old, went to enjoy the shootings. There had been no election for some time, so it could not have been in an election fight that this young fellow got hurt.

I knelt down and began to examine him. His eyes were closed. On lifting the lids, I saw that the eyes were sleepy but not dimmed and that they reacted to light. The heartbeat was regular but very faint. The breath was slight yet fair enough.

"What's the matter with him?" I asked.

"That's just what we don't know," the woman answered. "They brought him to the house unconscious and he hasn't come to since then. Do you think he will die, *señor*?"

"Sorry, I can't tell that at this moment. Hasn't he said something as to what's wrong with him?" I asked.

No-one answered and I looked up to see why there was no answer. I noticed that the man shot a quick look at his wife, put a finger slightly on his lips and shook his head.

Immediately I looked away pretending not to have seen anything, and let my eyes rest on the boy. I gave them time enough to finish their secret language. Then I asked, "Has he eaten something which did not agree with him?"

"I don't believe so," the man answered.

I sat down on a chair, my elbows on my knees, my face buried in my hands as if lost in deep thought, exactly the way all really big doctors do. In other words, I would not know anything until the sick man himself could tell me where it hurt and what the matter was.

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Now I said the same all doctors say, "This is a very serious case, but I shall do my very, very best and I'm sure we can pull him through."

At that moment the two armed men came in to see how I was doing.

"Where is my medicine chest?" I asked.

One of the two bolted out immediately, went into the main room and returned wth my cardboard box.

What I was to do with it, I did not know.

However, I was sure a good idea would come to my mind. I had to do something for I had been dragged here as a doctor and I was expected to behave and act as one. So I had no other choice but to please these people. No doubts puzzled my senses as to what would happen to me should I fail as a doctor.

It was obvious by now that the two men with their guns in hand were in the room for no other reason but to watch my performance. That they didn't let go of their guns convinced me that any minute they might point their guns at me and order, "You goddam *gringo*, you save that boy at once and if he isn't up and around in ten minutes, you'll lie next to him and deader than a kerbstone." Such things really happen to doctors in the Republic and since I had been brought here to work as a doctor, there was no reason why they should make an exception with me.

Now I started working.

"Do you have *Cafion* in the house?" I asked the woman, with an expression on my face as serious as that of a clergyman anointing and blessing a corpse.

"Yes, we've got a full tube of it."

"Three tablets and one glass of water."

I dissolved the tablets in the water and let the boy swallow the mixture. He took it perfectly without anything going into his windpipe.

Quietly I sat down, smoked a cigarette and asked for another shot of tequila.

After about ten minutes had gone by I examined the lad again and I discovered that the medicine had had an excellent effect. The heart had begun to beat more strongly. Though the tablets could easily have stimulated the heart so violently that it might have stopped beating altogether, I had luck which, by the way, every doctor needs if he wants to be a successful one.

Of course I know quite well that a real doctor would have

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done entirely differently. For that reason he has a licence and a partnership in an undertaker establishment. I, however, had to do with the knowledge and medicines that were at my disposal. I couldn't make a camphor or adrenalin injection in the heart because I had no tools for it nor camphor either.

By now the heart was beating strongly and satisfactorily but the boy refused, sternly refused, to wake up. I couldn't find anything on his head. I slapped his cheeks, palms and wrists. No success.

Now I untied my medicine box. All people present saw the contents, of course. However, I could not make out whether or not they were surprised at the different kinds of medicines in my box because no-one uttered a single sound of surprise. They might have thought that the fishhooks seen in the box served to fish something out of the stomach of one who had carelessly swallowed a scorpion that had fallen into the big earthen vessel from which people took their drinking water. The broken rusty pocket knife might, in their opinion, serve to amputate feet or arms or to take out an appendix. In any case, the respect towards me and the confidence in my abilities as a medico did not seem to grow less, but, as I could see and feel, increased immensely.

I took a half-used up tube of mentholatum and smeared a thick layer of it in the fellow's nose to help him breathe more easily. Now I asked whether they had ammoniac in the house. They had a little bottle of it and after having given him a few strong doses he sneezed and woke up. Vigorously I now fanned air at him and soon he began to breathe deeply, almost normally. But when he came to, he began to sigh pitifully as if from the depths of his very being.

Now I knew what was wrong and what I had not been told. If I spoke frankly of what I now knew, then to be sure, there would happen what I had expected since someone had knocked on my door. The knowledge I had gained in a roundabout way had made me a very unwanted witness. And that almost surely could be reason enough for the men to snuff me out.

I looked at the boy's aunt. Tears were in her eyes and I knew that she spoke seriously of her feeling towards the boy as though he were her own. The boy would perhaps recover without my help, yet not in less than two days. And in the meantime the soldiers would come and he who could not get away safely, would be shot right outside at the gate. No doubt, he would be shot.

Again I looked at the woman, who questioned me with her

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eyes. I don't want to say that I acted because of exaggerated philanthropy. That would be incorrect. Besides I don't want to appear better and nobler than I really am. To tell the truth, I am very much like any other ordinary man endowed with wickedness, baseness, but also with an earnest willingness to help my fellow creatures in trouble. In this case, out of sheer curiosity, I decided to find out what would happen to me if I did what I considered the most stupid and dangerous thing.

I looked steadily at the man with the machete and said in a short and loud voice, "Where then is that goddam hole? How can I bring him round if you don't tell me where he was shot?"

All present, even the old woman, were startled, uttered short exclamations, paled and looked with fright in their eyes from one to the other until they all focused their looks on me.

The uncle regained his composure first and said to the other two men in a tone as if he was ready to give up everything, "I told you before, but you didn't want to believe me, we can't bamboozle that *cabron* of a *gringo*. The hell of it he's a doctor through and through."

Now I didn't wait any longer. Resolutely I pulled the blanket back, looked quickly at the boy's chest and stomach, and there I noticed a heavy bloodstain on the *petate*. Examining the poor lad closer, I discovered two gun wounds, one in his thigh, the other in his left calf. The latter was not serious. A bullet had just grazed it.

In contrast the shot in the thigh had caused a heavy wound. Doubtless the bullet was out, for I noticed two holes, one where the slug had gone in and the one through which it went out again. Judging from the size of the holes it must have been a forty-five apparently fired from an automatic—the kind only the army is allowed to use.

The bone was not damaged, but the bullet had obviously torn several veins, causing so much loss of blood. The whole leg was sticky with dry blood and a light crust had already begun to form around the wounds. Very dirty rags had been used for a hasty bandage. The only danger for the youngster consisted in the possibility of an infection and as a possible aftermath, gangrene.

I ordered them quickly to boil some old linen rags. In my box I carried a few sterilised, still unused, gauze bandages. First I washed the wound with hot water and soap. Then I took a very strong disinfectant from my medicine box—the kind that had saved tens of thousands of American soldiers during the war. This stuff I poured undiluted directly into

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the wound and the poor boy practically jumped up. He must have felt as if someone had pierced him with a red hot iron right through the wounds. But he could be sure that this would save him. I let it dry, put some bismuth-iodoform over it and bandaged the hole with gauze. He sighed deeply but now with a definite expression of relief. I gave him a four-finger-high dose of tequila and within a few minutes he had fallen asleep soundly and quietly.

I could imagine what question would come up now. So I said right away, "When you put him on a horse tomorrow morning to make his get-away, it will be highly advisable to apply a bandage made of an old rubber hose or rubber belt or elastic braces, to avoid more bleeding for he easily might bleed to death."

I showed the men how to apply that safeguard, told them to boil each new bandage before using it, gave them the rest of my powders and disinfectants, asked for another tequila and bade them goodnight. I shook hands with all of them—the boy's aunt bent down and kissed my hand—and then I made my way to the door.

I surely must have given them the impression that what I saw and did here was to me a daily occurrence. But the truth is, that now I expected any moment that one of the men would say, "Wait a minute, mister *gringo*, you just wait a minute, you cannot go away like that. We first got to have a word with you before you leave this neighbourhood. And we got to have that word outside, you'll understand. Best place is behind the vegetable patch."

The fact that I did not say a word as to how the boy might have got his wounds, nor even let on that I knew they were gunshots, the fact that I behaved as if I were a bandit myself and a close friend of the family and that it was immaterial to me what my neighbours thought of me and I of them as long as they left me alone—all this quite obviously upset their plans and made them puzzled. And so as to lay still more emphasis on all this, I said nonchalantly, "Should he get worse you may call me any time; I will be only too glad to be of help to you."

By appearance, the last words decided the outcome. No one will slay the only doctor in the vicinity and, because of his not being licensed he has no professional duty to inform the authorities of gunshot wounds he has attended.

However, it was not so easy to get away. When I had reached the door, the uncle said, "Excuse me, mister, but we cannot let you go home alone, something might happen to you

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on the way and besides you might not find your way back. You may easily lose yourself in the underbrush. We brought you here and it would be impolite not to see you back home."

And so I saw before me the prospect of marching again at night through underbrush, with three men, two carrying guns and the other a machete—three men who would be happier to have one certain guy less in this world, one who knew too much for their comfort, even though they might have a good opinion of this doctor and his willingness to help. Only one of them needed to entertain such a thought, and before the other two would be able to prevent it, it would be all over.

Sharply and significantly I looked at the aunt. Out of politeness she had not taken her seat again, but was waiting instead to do so when I had left the house. She contemplated me with gratitude in her eyes. As if by a sudden impulse she now came close, took my hands, kissed them again and with a smile on her lips went to a little cupboard, took out a jar of honey and gave it to me, saying, "This is very good for baking little cakes; it doesn't make them taste so dry. Tomorrow I'll send you two dozen eggs and a few pounds of good beef. And again, many, many thanks for coming."

"*No hay porqué, señora,* not worth mentioning. By the

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way, when the boy wakes up give him a good strong meat-broth with two, or better still, four eggs whisked in. It will put him back on his feet quickly. Goodnight, *señora*."

The woman knew very well what might happen to me on the way back home should the men feel that their safety was at stake. But I had won her sympathy and thankfulness. She, as I learned later, played a more important part in the business than what would be guessed from the surface and what her honest appearance conveyed.

Reflecting on the look of this sweet, sweet home where even a huge heavily-framed picture of the Pope in full regalia was not missing and where a candle before an image of the Virgin was burning day and night, I could tell who was in command. Since this woman doubtless was more intelligent than any of the men I had met so far, I also knew who was the brain of the enterprise. There is not much difference between an intelligently-led band of robbers and certain types of banking institutions whose presidents ride in custom-built cars. Today as always, the best mask behind which to cover successful deeds and misdeeds is an innocent appearance, a plain face and an ostentatious display of believing in God and in the holiness of His servants. And that smart and intelligent woman, when she told me in the presence of those men, "I'm sending you in the morning meat and eggs," was in effect saying, "Woe to these mugs if you are not safe and sound at your house tomorrow to enjoy what I'm sending you."

The men understood the command. And they also understood the doctor had to be preserved for the good of the flourishing business.

We arrived peacefully at my bungalow. When we parted, with a well-meant *Buenas noches*, I felt three pesos pressed into my hand by the uncle. "Please, take this, mister, for a small reimbursement."

"Excuse me," I said, "I don't ever take anything from my friends for assistance which I give for purely humane reasons and I'll always do the same whenever an opportunity presents itself."

For a while he held the three pesos in his hand most likely believing that it was only out of politeness that I refused the money and that in the end I would take it anyway. He, as everyone else in the village, knew how well I could use three pesos. But again I resolutely said, "You don't want to offend me, do you, *señor*?"

"Definitely not," he answered, "most definitely not," while

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at the same time replacing the three pesos in his pocket. Then he added, "Let me see, maybe I can send you two more fellows tomorrow who want to study the English language."

"That's better," I said. "Tomorrow morning I'll come to see how your boy is getting along."

"Well, well," he muttered, "I don't know but if you insist, all right by me."

Next morning at about nine or so, I went to see the lad. Scarcely had I passed the last house of the village when I met the uncle, and immediately I had the feeling that he had been waiting for me because he did not want me to come to his house in daylight. I was not even sure that I could find that house again. In fact when one week later I tried to find it out of pure curiosity, I lost my way so completely that it took me hours to get on the trail back to the village, and that only with the help of a man I met in the bush. During that eventful night I had been taken through underbrush and thickets in such a way that, while I thought I knew where we were going, I only learned later that I had been wrong all over.

The uncle told me the boy had been up very early and had gone away with the others. Then he added carefully,

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"We put the bandage on as you told us to and everything went very fine. The wound is healing already. And there is the meat and the eggs the woman promised you last night. And, by the way, mister, you'd better not talk much about all this in the village. You know people might think there was a sort of brawl or what have you and that would give the boy a bad reputation. He's going to get married, see. You understand that, don't you, mister?"

"I understand perfectly," I said. "I've no reason to talk about anything. Not anything at all. But I would very much like you, please, to buy for me the medicine I used up last night when you get to town."

"Of course, of course, it will be a pleasure," he said, and took the note on which I had scribbled the name of what I wanted and we parted.

When I got home two men were sitting at my doorstep. They wanted to learn English and they paid me ten hours in advance.

Early in the morning two days later, I noticed that the village was surrounded by soldiers. Nobody was allowed to leave the village, but those coming from the outside could come in. A few houses were searched and on the main square all men, women and children were questioned by officers of the district police.

I soon learned what had happened.

A few nights before, bandits had attacked a *hacienda*, bound the owners and had taken all the money they could lay their hands on. Thirty thousand pesos had been stolen. Every child of course knew that this was a lie. No owner of any *hacienda* would ever have that much money in his house. Two thousand pesos might have come closer to facts. The soldiers, all Indians themselves, had traced the bandits to this village. Since the place was rumoured to be a nest of bandits, the soldiers would have come here anyway.

I walked slowly towards the centre of the plaza to watch what was going on when a man from the village stopped me and said, "There's not much to see. They'll soon go away again without having caught any bandits. They are only looking for an *hombre* who helped a wounded bandit to get away. When they find that man, the soldiers will shoot him immediately after he has dug his own grave at the cemetery. The officers say that men like these are far more dangerous to mankind than the bandits themselves."

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THE PICK OF THE WORLD'S SHORT STORIES

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"What did the man do; how did he help the bandit to make his getaway?" I asked. "Bandits are big and clever enough to help themselves."

"This is a different case," the man said. "It happened this way, you see. At that last *hacienda* a young bandit was shot in the leg, maybe he got two shots. He bled profusely, but his friends got him away and they reached this village. Someone had seen them carry the wounded man on horseback. Where they took him, nobody knows. Then they got hold of a doctor, not a real one, but as you know, *señor*, one who can do just as well. Now you see, yesterday morning the man, actually a mere boy, was well enough to ride away. The bandits were seen by peasants working in the bush, but the doctor who cured the boy was not with them. They would not have got away. The soldiers would have found the boy and then found out who he was, to what family he belonged and so they would've caught the whole gang."

"Highly interesting," I said. "And now it seems there isn't much hope of catching them?"

"Very little. Since they know that the wounded boy escaped, they are only looking for the doctor who cured him and helped him get away. The officers say that the doctor lives here in this village. They have surrounded the whole place so now he cannot get out. They are searching all the houses and as soon as they find the medicine they will know right away who he is. Then they will shoot him on the spot."

"That serves him right," I said. "No decent person should ever help a *bandolero*."

"You have medicine at your house, too, haven't you?" my neighbour asked.

"Yes, a little for emergency cases. As we call it, First Aid."

At that very moment one officer accompanied by three soldiers came out of the house opposite from where we stood and where they had searched for medicine. I had no liking for being searched and questioned by police, so I walked on, but the neighbour said, "Stay quietly where you are, *señor*, they won't do anything to us."

I also thought it best to stand still as the officer with his men approached me. Since I was completely innocent, never having attended wounded bandits, never having helped bandits to get away, I had no reason to feel embarrassed.

"Which of the huts over there is yours, *señor*?" the officer in charge asked.

"That one there, yes, that bungalow back there," I said.

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"Have you got any medicine in your *jacal*?" he asked.

"Yes, a little."

"What kind?"

"A half empty tube of mentholatum for colds, *señor*."

"Can you cure shotgun wounds?"

"Have any one of your men been shot?" I asked sympathetically.

"Yes," said the officer.

"I'm sorry to hear that," I said, "but when I see blood, I faint right away, it makes me awfully sick."

"That's exactly what you look like. You *gringos*, all of you, don't have the healthy strong nerves we have got. We can see blood and plenty of it. Of course, no offence meant. Excuse me for bothering you. We're on duty here, you know, *adios*." He shook hands with me.

My neighbour followed the officer into another hut.

While I was standing there, contemplating whether to disappear or remain where I was, a boy ran towards me, shouting before he even reached me: "*Mira, señor*, there is the medicine I brought from town. The *señor* said everything is paid already."

I took the package and put it into my pocket.

As soon as my corn was harvested and sold, I thought it wise to leave the neighbourhood without waiting for another thing to happen.

A few weeks later I was sitting in a train going to the capital. Railroad trips sometimes bring people together who would otherwise not speak to persons not known to them or having nothing in common.

Two gentlemen, both natives, sat in front of me, and asked whether I would like to play a game of *Siete y Medio* with them. I agreed. We played for beer which was served on the train and thus passed the time until we got tired of the game.

Now they wanted to talk the kind of small talk one indulges in on a train and, as always, the conversation very soon turned to Americans living in the Republic and, invariably, whenever a remark was dropped slightly offensive to an American, the gentlemen politely added, "You understand, *señor*, that was meant only in general, no intention of offending you or your *compatriotas*."

Then they laughed and I also said something critical of the natives and grinning I would add that one says things like that only for the sake of conversation and that I like every one of

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them very much as if they were my own countrymen and that all of us have our good and bad sides regardless of what nation we are citizens of.

"And right you are, *señor*," said one of the two. "We've got many *Norte-Americanos* down here who cause lots of mischief in our country."

"That I know, *señor*; there are for instance the big oil magnates, and the mining companies, and the chicle and fruit companies and the big bankers who would like nothing better than to annex one Latin American country after another."

"Yes, of course, those too," he said, "but the fact is I did not think of that sort right now. I was thinking of another sort of *gringos*. Oh, excuse me, please, what I meant to say is that it seems to me that all the bums and gangsters, gamblers and drug-peddlers and hoodlums for whom it gets too hot up there in the States come down here and try their nasty tricks on our honest people here."

"Yes, there are that kind, too," I admitted, "and they believe they are safe down here."

"Not with me," said that little fat gentleman, "no, not with me. With me they don't get very far. In my district these godforsaken hoodlums won't exist. They simply cannot stay alive. I am on their trail immediately. And when I catch them I give them plenty. And when I say plenty I mean plenty. They get deported and take their rap at home."

"Seems you are an Attorney General?" I asked, to please him.

"Not yet, but some day maybe, who knows. No, right now I'm Chief of the Rural Police in the district of San Vicente Legardilla. Do you know that district, *señor*? Ever been there?"

"Who? Me? Never in my life," I said truthfully. One must always tell the truth to a Chief of Police, a Judge or a District Attorney. Only then and then only, can one pass life pleasantly and happily. I somehow got suspicious of these two gentlemen because San Vicente Lagardilla happened to be the very district where I had rented and worked a small cotton farm and where I had been living in a shaky bungalow in a village among people who, all of them without exception, looked innocent like freshly washed angels decorating a saint's picture.

The Chief, of course, knew immediately that I had never been even near that neighbourhood. That's why he felt that he could talk freely to me.

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"There, in my district, a fair amount of *Norte-Americanos* are living; some are shopkeepers, some cotton planters, others farmers and cattle raisers. They are decent and honest people who pay their taxes punctually and live strictly by the law. None of them ever causes me any trouble. People with education, industrious, money-saving, progressive. People we are proud of, *señor*; countrymen of yours towards whom I feel a deep respect and we would welcome as citizens, you know."

"Yes, I've met many such fine people from home. Too bad that they didn't stay home," I said, with profound conviction.

The Chief seemed not to care much about my opinion. He wanted to talk and so I let him continue. The greatest pleasure one can give people is to let them talk all they want. One is respected much more if one lets people talk instead of talking oneself. So he continued to tell about a poor fellow who, as it seemed, had lived in his district and had given him a lot of headaches. He swore that said fellow was wanted for murder, theft, rape, forgery, smuggling of narcotics, selling worthless shares of a gold mine and a few other felonies. "I never knew how he managed to come to my district nor what he actually did there. He pretended to farm or search for oil, but in reality he was sort of a tramp who scarcely had rags on his back. He never paid for the lease of his farm nor the rent for the elegant house in which he lived."

"Maybe the poor chap had no money," I replied.

"Perhaps you are right there and I don't hold that against him. *Dios mio*, any good man may have bad luck. But what irked me ferociously was what he did in my district. He was a quack. Not that I would have asked him for his licence even if he operated on people's bellies, but what I hated most was that he cured all the *bandoleros* we shot and that made me really mad. Without him we would've shot them all to pieces. But through his activities we never could get a single one of those monsters.

"He protected them, all of them. He knew every single *jacal* where they lived and hid out. Worse thing was he not only cured them, but he supplied them with a sort of magic potion which made them nearly invisible so that they succeeded in all their attacks. He worked with radio transmitters and light signals, so that these outlaws knew many hours before when the soldiers would arrive at the village. And what money this man earned! The heaps of pesos that the *bandoleros* brought to his bungalow! That man earned ten times as much as I do being Chief of Police! On top of all that he taught all of

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them English so that they could attack and rob the American farmers in their own language, his own countrymen. *Madre mia*, how I chased that man!

"Four times I was there with a whole company of soldiers to catch him. You, being intelligent, can imagine how much money all that has cost our government. You see, we can't do anything without money. Everything costs money and a Chief of Police has to live, too. He cannot work for peanuts just out of love for his profession. I received many reproaches from the Government and several times I was threatened with dismissal if I could not bring law and order into my district. I reported everything in a sixty-page typewritten report. Now the Government finally realises that I did all that was humanly possible and now they know very well if those goddam lawbreakers have a smart *gringo* backing them, what can I with only one company of soldiers at my command do against *bandoleros*? You tell me, *señor*."

"Didn't you ever catch that *gringo*?"

"Never, no never. He was so sly, so goddam cunning we never could even lay an eye on him. Besides being the doctor of the *bandoleros*, how could we get anywhere? They protected him because they needed him so very badly. The government knows all that by now. Some day they will get him. We've notified all the police departments in the Republic. Only trouble is we haven't got a picture of him."

"How much will he get, once he's caught?"

"Oh, he will either be shot or sent up for thirty years to the Islas Marias."

"Doesn't that gorilla live in your district any more?" broke in the other gentleman.

"No, he left one night. We had made it so terribly hot for him that at last he simply had to take to his heels. And believe you me, *señor*, since he's gone, we've had no more attacks by *bandoleros*. The village is peaceful and quiet as it hasn't been for many years. So you will see how one man low as only a *gringo* can be—oh, excuse me, *señor*, please—may corrupt a whole district populated by law-abiding citizens and good Catholics besides."

When we arrived at San Juan del Río, two deputies whom the Chief knew entered the train and right away they began a lengthy conversation with the other two gentlemen, now and then shooting a kind of investigating, suspicious glance at me as if they had seen me before somewhere. So I thought it

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would be better for me to take advantage of their being engaged in a lively conversation.

Knowing the ways and tricks of members of the police force, especially the plain-clothed ones, I got off the train as unnoticed as possible at the last stop before it reached the Central Station of the capital and for convenience' sake boarded a city-bound streetcar.

After all, how was I to know that my pupils wanted to learn English for no other reason than to make the cattle of American farmers obey and follow them in a language which the cows understood? And all I got out of my doctoring bandits was a jar of honey—good honey at that—two dozen eggs, a few pounds of beef and three pesos which I did not accept. This certainly was no just equivalent for a possible thirty-year stretch on the Islas Marias.

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in **argosy** *next month*

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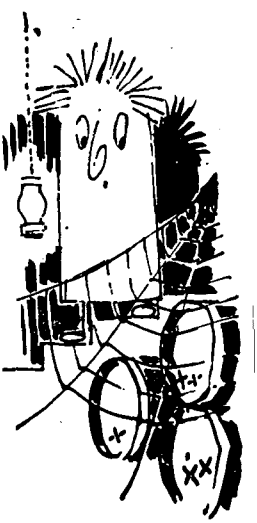
STARTING even a modest cellar can be full of interest, and can be done for as little as £10. But in the long run, with prices tending to go on rising, an outlay of £50 would prove a wiser investment.

The best way to start is to draw up a list of the wines you need not put into it, but can buy as and when you want them. At the top of the list put sherry, which does not improve in bottle and is a blended wine. Next come the vins ordinaires, selling at prices ranging from 8s. to 12s. per bottle. They are mostly blended, factory-made wines, none the worse for that, but designed for quick drinking, not maturing.

Vintage ports are expensive, costing from 22s. 6d. per bottle for 1960 wines, up to 40s. for 1950. The good wines are seldom at their best for ten years, while those of 1945 and 1948 may take twenty years to come to perfection. But late-bottled vintage port at about 23s. per bottle can be bought as you want it. Brandy is also expensive, and there is little point in buying it for the small cellar.



The first choice for your racks—and those made of wood and expanded metal are the best—should be clarets, and the second the red and white burgundies. One must face up to the fact that the wines of the best-known Bordeaux châteaux are expensive, so the small-cellar

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man should look for the lesser-known "bourgeois" wines in the lists of Findlater, Army and Navy Stores, Selfridges, Berry Brothers, and Peter Dominic among others. If you are prepared to wait ten to fifteen years, buy the wines of 1961, for it was a classic year of great wines. The 1960 wines are cheaper and mature more quickly, while 1962 may prove to be the best year since 1953. Among the names to look for are Château Paradis, Montagne-St. Emilion, Brane-Cantenac, La Croix Des Moines Pomerol, Liversan Pauillac, and Beausite St. Estephe. These wines cost up to about 16s. per bottle.

Those people wanting something ready to drink in the next two or three years should certainly allocate space and money to some red Beaujolais wines, choosing those of 1961 and 1962 and from single estates. Peter Dominic have a particularly good list of them at prices between 11s. and 17s. per bottle—the 1962 Fleurie is a sound buy. Include a few bottles of the white Beaujolais.

As for red burgundy, look for the Chambolle-Musigny and Gevrey-Chambertin of 1959, the Volnay of the same year, and the Pommard Supérieur of 1961. The white Chassagne-Montrachet of 1959 and 1961 is a sensible purchase, so is the Meursault 1959 of the white burgundies.

Most Italian wines are sold for quick drinking but it is worth laying down a few bottles of the 1961 Gattarina from the Piedmont for drinking from 1967 onwards: Gilbey Twiss usually have it. As for dessert wines, the rich 1959 hocks are expensive, but the Alsatian Hugel and Preiss-Zimmer muscat wines are appreciably cheaper and of splendid quality.

At the same time it would be prudent to find room for some bottles of Hock and Moselle. While some of the 1963 wines seem full of promise, it is a little early for anyone but an expert to buy them. It would be better to go for the 1961 wines; for instance, Dürkheimer from the Palatinate.

It would be wrong not to have a few bottles of champagne, the prince of wines, in the cellar, and the vintage year to buy is 1959. The vintage wines of the famous houses cost between 35s. and 40s. per bottle, and the non-vintage about 8s. to 10s. less, but Findlaters are shipping the dry Duc de Marne at 26s. 3d.

Assuming an outlay of £50, how much should the creator of the new cellar spend on this or that wine? If quantity rather than quality is the main consideration, the answer is to cut down on the clarets and cut out the hocks and moselles.

J. B. W.

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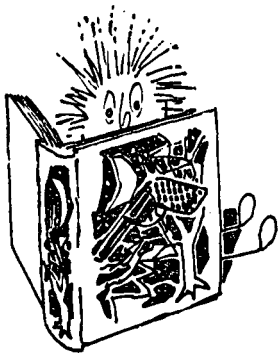

bookshelf

WHEN Hugh Lowther returned from a few days' shooting, he was met by his wife at the door of their cottage, her face pale and anxious.

"It took Hugh one look to know that the worst had happened. Two large men, still in their raincoats, with their bowler hats laid neatly on the table in front of them, were seated staring uncomfortably into space. The bailiffs were in."

Later on the same evening Hugh was summoned to London. His brother St. George was dying. Not in his mansion of a home in the fashionable Carlton Terrace, but in a small house in Bryanston Street which he used for very private entertaining.

Next morning his body was smuggled back to Carlton Terrace in a hansom cab before his death could be publicly announced and his brother Hugh, bailiffs still at his home, became the 5th Earl of Lonsdale and one of the wealthiest men in the land in 1882. From rags to riches, fact not fiction, overnight!

The Yellow Earl by Douglas Sutherland tells the tragi-comedy life story of Hugh Cecil Lowther, 5th Earl of Lonsdale, who inherited a vast fortune but could leave no heir—his wife was thrown in a hunting accident and her baby was born prematurely, dead: after months of illness they were told she could never have another.

Lonsdale entered into his unexpected inheritance with the gusto and flamboyance that coloured everything he did. In his own phrase "everything was lovely fun." He became a personal friend of the Kaiser and King Edward. He spent a fortune on horses and beautiful women, including the most glamorous of them all, Lily Langtry. His income was about

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or between eighty and a hundred thousand pounds a year, and this was over sixty years ago, remember! Yet, incredibly, he was soon in financial trouble again.

Time dealt kindly with Lonsdale who became more charming and mellow the older he grew. He was over eighty when he died in 1944, a comparatively poor man, nearly always alone, spending his days pottering round his garden with his beloved dogs. People flocked to his funeral as though to a State occasion and the newspapers all over the world made headlines of his death. He would have liked that—life had been "such lovely fun." (Cassell, 36s.)

Gavin Lyall, author of the best-seller, The Most Dangerous Game, has come up with another splendid adventure, *Midnight Plus One*. True its ingredients are painfully familiar, but the way they're mixed together isn't, and the end product is exciting.

Cann, whose actual profession is a bit obscure, takes on the job of escorting a multi-millionaire at speed on a highly dangerous journey across France. The millionaire is wanted by the police on a trumped-up charge of rape as well as by a faceless, most unpleasant enemy who will gladly kill anyone who gets in his way. On Cann's side is a highly-paid professional gunman—an encouragingly perfect shot, but unfortunately a compulsive drinker as well.

The hazardous journey is further complicated by the millionaire's secretary who may well be double-crossing him . . . (Hodder and Stoughton, 18s.)

As much Irish earth as his hawk could fly over was Cromwell's reward to Colonel Henry Bowen when this grim and godless adventurer fought with the Roundheads in that green island—the land which has always refused to remain conquered or to forget. It was on this stolen plot between the beautiful Blackwater and the Ballyhoura Hills that another Bowen was to build a tall, many-windowed house, cool and austere, and where generations of the family have lived since. *Bowen's Court* by Elizabeth Bowen tells the story of what has happened to those people. (Longmans, 42s.)

How's this for a beginning?

"Death reached out for Peter Styles on a bleak winter morning, and then, at the last moment, passed him by, leaving him physically and psychically shattered . . . transformed in one terrible moment into a bitter, self-pitying, introverted hate-ridden caricature of himself."

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This is the opening of Judson Philip's new thriller, *The Laughter Trap*, and believe me it never looks back! Once I had started I didn't put the book down till I got to its stunning ending. This American author goes from strength to strength. (Gollancz, 15s.)

I was lunching with Jean Leroy, author of *Sell Them a Story*, which comes out this month. I said: "They say everybody has one novel bottled up inside them waiting to get out. So why don't they get written? What makes a writer write? What tools do they need?" and I answered my own question: "Flair and know-how."

Jean said: "I'd add to that. Hard work. It isn't easy, you know."

So there you have it, all you could-be authors, three rules to success: "Hard work," which is up to you; "Flair," which you'll find out about as soon as you get going; and "Know-how," which is yours for 3s. 6d.—for Jean Leroy's *Sell Them a Story* is as full and completely knowledgeable a course as you could find anywhere.

Now, having taken care of the author, there's the other side—the audience. I quote Jean again: "A very great deal depends on the reader. Never think, or even permit yourself to say, that you are writing for your own pleasure. What will make your work live is the pleasure it gives to others, and all good writing must have a point of fusion, so that it belongs to the reader's life as well as yours. Acceptance, by the agent, or the editor, or the publisher, is only the first of many acceptances."

Go on, buy a copy, and have a go! (Pan Books, 3s. 6d.)

The best Maigret for some time: *Maigret Loses His Temper*. It would be a pity to write more about this excellent story, as so much of the pleasure of a Simenon novella is in the unique personality of his protagonist and in the telling, rather than the intricacies of the plot. A second new Simenon—not a Maigret though—has just come on to the bookstalls too, *The Blue Room*. (Hamish Hamilton, 13s. 6d. each.)

A new, paperback home-reference book with almost everything anyone could need to know about modern living is out this month and is called, with good reason, *Information Here*. Robert and Christine Turner are the compilers, and it's worth every penny of the 6s. it will cost you. (Pelham Books, 6s.)

J. D.

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man about cars

I glanced suspiciously at the bright red Bedford Beagle waiting for me outside. I use the word "suspiciously," because Martin Walter Ltd. have transformed the Bedford Beagle 8 cwt. van into a roomy estate car and the idea of a van being bright red brought back some childhood memories.

We used to live on an isolated farm and the baker, complete with red van, used to visit us once a week. I would climb into the back—and as the van would go lurching into the village, I'd be surrounded by the wonderful smell of warm, newly-made bread and be buffeted around like a crusty roll!

The Beagle quickly banished any worries of that sort. Vauxhall Motors and Martin Walter Ltd. have between them produced a roomy and comfortable "big little one." It is endowed with plenty of glass: a deep windscreen at the front and full length side windows with a swivelling centre panel, so there is certainly no shortage of sun and air.

Inside, the wide and well-made rear seat folds flat in the normal estate car manner to provide a large flat area behind the driver. This is covered with plastic material and metal runners at reasonable intervals. The finish is good if not luxurious and the whole vehicle has an air of sturdy usefulness. Seats are on the firm side but quite comfortable and have a good range of adjustments: a little more shaping, though, would help to hold one more firmly when cornering.

With or without a load, the Beagle proved a willing performer. Its 1057 cc. engine moved it along with plenty of vigour. An unusual point about this test was that for once I had the right car at the right time—I usually find that I am forced to test a draughty, hoodless, unheated monster in the coldest and wettest spell and a centrally-heated, hermetically-sealed horror during a heat-wave! At this time I was in the throes of heaving things around, loading and unloading them, sometimes with help and sometimes without. I can report that the Beagle is only too willing to accept large and bulky objects, and with the large rear doors it is exceptionally easy to load and unload it.

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About the only difference between the laden and unladen state is in the handling.

With the extra weight on the back wheels, the Beagle sits more firmly round the corners and rides the bumps a little more tactfully.

Performance, in terms of getaway and top speed, remains largely unaffected.

With a rather more firm rear end than the Viva, with which it shares its mechanical parts, the Beagle can give a distinctly bouncy ride on a poor surface and the back is rather more inclined to break away if no load is being carried. When laden, the stability is much improved—the gear change is quick and smooth with a pleasantly short floor-mounted lever. On the test car, however, there was a stiffness between third and second gear, but this might quite easily be eliminated once the car was run in.

Top speed is in the low seventies and petrol consumption works out at about 35 m.p.g. on commercial grade petrol. (It always appeals to the " Scrooge " in me to be able to run on the cheapest petrol.)

It is a pity that a little more care has not been taken in the design of the interior trim.

In the rear, the trim below the windows doesn't pick up the line of the door sills and a staid-looking effect is the result. By keeping the van door trim (pressed plastic panels), the result is a most unpleasant conglomeration of materials and shades.

More attention to this sort of detail would, I am sure, make this a more appealing vehicle. Some extra attention could also have been given to the light and wiper switches on the scuttle. Although near to hand and easy to operate, it is quite easy to mix headlight and wiper switches which could be dangerous. On all other counts the layout of controls is extremely well-designed with minimum effort to the driver in mind.

Lively and likeable, with lots of room, the Beagle is economical to run and should appeal to all those who want a sturdy carry-all with good looks and who need to pay some regard to the question or petrol consumption.

It costs about £620—with a reasonable list of optional extras —from all Vauxhall dealers.

K. F.

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TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Simplest of animals (6).

4 Colourful young dandy! (5).

7 My pet hate? (8).

9 Money for the girl? (4).

10 To do with arms (8).

12 Doughty fellow (6).

14 City of the doges (6).

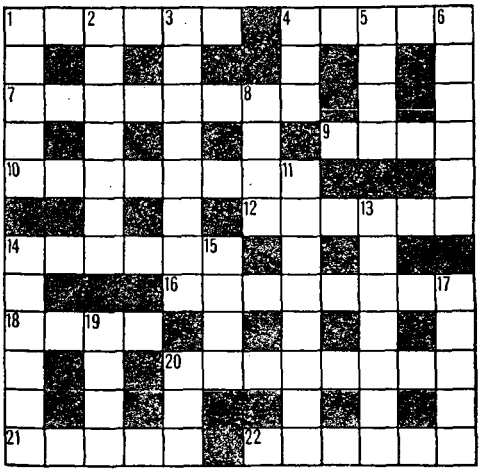
16 All the birds in a region (8).

18 Cobbler's final aid? (4).

20 Detained alien (8).

21 French bird of prey? (5).

22 Book of sacred songs (6).



DOWN

1 Clean at sea! (5).

2 Infested (7).

3 Royal palace started with a name (8).

4 Hairy ball (3).

5 Small furnace (4).

6 Sphere of influence (6).

8 Skip! (4).

11 Scots smallholders (8).

13 Daily record of events (7).

14 Fullness of tone (6).

15 Uniform (4).

17 He proves a plea (5).

19 Consorts with bulls and bears! (4).

20 Road hazard (3).

(Solution on page 95)

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (APRIL ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Spirit.* 4, *Standard.* 9, *Custom.* 10, *Gargoyle.* 12, *Rule.* 13, *Worst.* 14, *Anon.* 17, *Tennis-player.* 20, *Four Feathers.* 23, *Tout.* 24, *Snick.* 25, *Calf.* 28, *Aesthete.* 29, *Indoor.* 30, *Not amiss.* 31, *Carrot.*

Down. 1, *Security.* 2, *Insolent.* 3, *Iron.* 5, *Transparency.* 6, *Nigh.* 7, *Anyone.* 8, *Dyeing.* 11, *Compare notes.* 15, *Simon.* 16, *Petty.* 18, *Belabour.* 19, *Ask for it.* 21, *Strain.* 22, *Outset.* 26, *Shem.* 27, *Anna.*

ANSWERS TO THE PUZZLE ON PAGE 71

ECONOMY, HYENA, PESTLE.

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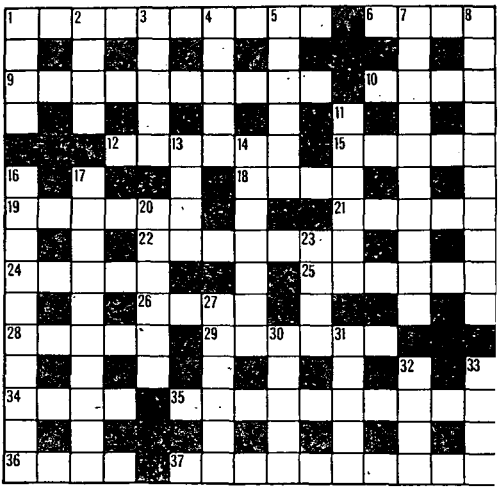
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 By far the best description of a grass widow's husband? (3, 3,4).

6 "The seas are too ——" (Bacon) (4).

9 Rightly estimate a rise in value (10).

10 Seasonal drop (4).

12 Unable to see? (6).

15 Idols don't change shape? (5).

18 Smart boy! (4).

19 Car goes right after changing route (6).

21 No lag gets on! (5).

22 Slattern novelist heard (7).

24 Girl in ballet typecast? (5).

25 Grade in education? (6).

26 American State service? (4).

28 Dance with beat and drive! (5).

29 Missing part of ashtray (6).

34 Not full when new (4).

35 Durable—like bespoke shoes? (4,2,4).

36 He commemorates Christmas (4).

37 Keeps an eye on money-makers! (4,6).

DOWN

1 Gave gem in ring to friend (4).

2 Be true to this! (4).

3 She's on the riviera, we hear (5).

4 Take French leave? (5).

5 Altogether factual? Yes and no (6).

7 Similar to crawling? (2,3,5).

8 Klondike coquette? (4-6).

11 Flight after fire? (6).

13 This one's hard to shake off (4).

14 Anarchic as Wells? (7).

16 Actor of small part —useful chap to have (7-3).

17 Flower for th wedding (10).

20 Word for root (6

23 Water in modera tion! (4).

27 African journey (6).

30 You can stand i (5).

31 Gives coffee-hous its peculiar flavour? (5

32 "The pale —— o thought" (*Hamle* (4).

33 Leading light? (4).

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The broadcast by the BBC entitled "Can I Learn to be a Writer?" was based on interviews with the senior coach of the London School of Journalism and some of our successful students who spoke of the help they had received in attaining their success.

Their testimony was reinforced by the editress of a great national periodical who spoke of the need for competent instruction in the writing of features intended for publication.

Further tributes to the LSJ were broadcast last year on January 28th, March 1st and October 20th.

A warning was given about the doubtful value of the claims made by certain schools. If you seek our advice, you will not be lured by lavish promises or bombarded with letters urging enrolment upon you. If you decide to become a member, you will work under a personal coach and your work will be fully criticised and returned promptly . . . no waiting for weeks or even months. And you will make money.

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